LIVING WITH WATER: ENVIRONMENT, SLAVERY, & SPIRITUALITY IN NZULEZO (WEST AFRICA), MID-1700—MID-1800

By

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ABSTRACT

"Living with Water" is a comprehensive social and environmental history of Nzulezo—a community on stilts in the middle of the Amanzule River in southwestern Ghana—that seeks to broaden our understanding of how human relations around water over time resulted in complex relationships between culture and ecology. It further explores how these relationships shaped spirituality, community identity, and human adaptation to slavery and physically challenging environments. Nzulezo is the only stilt-house community in Ghana and one of the few in Africa whose history dates to the mid-eighteenth century. For over two centuries, Nzulezo people have lived on the Amanzule River, enduring challenging environmental conditions like seasonal flooding and unfavorable historical events like the Atlantic slave trade and European colonialism. This dissertation delves into the reasons why the Nzulezo people chose to build their homes in the middle of a river, how they have managed to survive on the Amanzule over the years, and how their past fits into the broader history of the African continent.

Through oral histories, archival research, and community-based ethnographies, I argue that religious and environmental factors—such as meeting the spiritual demands of the Nzulezo snail deity, *evu*, as well as gaining access to freshwater and its (non-)edible resources—necessitated the creation of the Nzulezo community in the middle of the Amanzule River. These findings reconsider received orthodoxies in African historiography that suggest that pre-colonial West Africans constructed settlements in the middle of bodies of water, or hard-to-access spaces, during the Atlantic era primarily as a defense against the Atlantic slave trade. In the case of Nzulezo, spiritual and environmental factors were crucial in shaping the people's choice of settlement location. These findings allow us to see pre-colonial West African communities in greater complexity and to understand the lives of individuals beyond and outside the frame of the

slave trade.

Significantly, Nzulezo's past challenges conventional approaches in African environmental history that often historicize the African environment solely from a *land-centric* viewpoint. These theoretical approaches tend to overlook the significance of water to the lives and history of Africans. In this dissertation, I re-center water in the symbiotic relationships between humans and their environment, arguing for a shift in research focus toward water-based regions like Nzulezo. I emphasize the position of water as both an agent and a context for understanding how Africans have forged dynamic relationships with their environment.

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved late mother, Esther Akosua Frimpomaa, and my late father, Welbeck Kwame Henebeng, who could not live to witness the completion of this research and Ph.D.

May your loving souls find eternal rest with your Maker!

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Nzema) but also by them. Nzulezo and Appolonian people "accepted" and taught me their history; I am sincerely grateful for that. My gratitude especially goes to Awulae Annor Adjaye II, the king of Western Nzema, and Nana Takrika VII, the chief of Nzulezo. They graciously allowed me to experience and learn about their unique cultures. Special thanks also go to Nzulezo elders and people, particularly Joshua Ezoa (a.k.a. Jasco) and your family, Agya Kulu, Maame Nda Aluah, Home Stay, Safohyenle Kwame, and all the individuals I collaborated with. want to express my sincere appreciation to Baba Moro, my research assistant, for his invaluable guidance, patience, and exceptional work ethics. To Mr. Stephen Assyne and (the late) Mrs. Mary Assyne, may your beloved soul rest in peace, I am eternally grateful for accepting me as your son and providing me with accommodation during my one-and-a-half-year research work in Nzema. I will always remain grateful to you and the Assyne family!

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INTRODUCTION

"We are a people with a past, not animals . . . why does the Ghana government allow the Ghana Wildlife Society, instead of the Ghana Tourism Authority, to regulate tourism in our community?"[1] This complaint levied against the Ghanaian State in June 2017 by a leader of Nzulezo—a community on stilts in southwestern Ghana—reveals tensions in the State's categorization of Nzulezo in seemingly non-human terms. It also illuminates the need for a better understanding of Nzulezo history, its ecological space, and the way its people perceive themselves in relation to others.

Nzule is the Nzema word for "water" and *zo* for "on."[2] Literally, *Nzulezo* means "on water;" and contextually, it represents the people who live on stilts in the middle of the Amanzule River in Ghana. Nzulezo is the only stilt-house community in Ghana (formerly, and hereafter, referred to as the Gold Coast) and one of the few in Africa (like Ganvié in the Republic of Benin) whose history dates to the early eighteenth century.[3] Established on the Amanzule River in the pre-colonial Kingdom of Appolonia in southwestern Gold Coast, the Nzulezo community is surrounded by thick raffia palm vegetation that is home to animals like monkeys, butterflies, and water birds like magpies.[4] The river is also home to aquatic animals like crocodiles, snakes, and fish.[5] Oral tradition explains that the people of Nzulezo have lived in

[1] It was a sunny afternoon on the 17th of July 2017 when the then Ghanaian minister of tourism, Honorable Catherine Afeku, visited the Nzulezo stilt-house community. Afeku's visit constituted part her nationwide tour to inspect the conditions of the over 40 tourist attractions in Ghana. The minister's visit coincided with my 2017 summer pre-dissertation research in Nzulezo. This meeting presented a rare opportunity for Nzulezo people to engage in a direct dialogue with the minister who represented the Ghana government. The people unreservedly voiced out their grievances toward the government's marginalization of the community.

[2] Nzema is the language of the people of the Nzema State in present-day southwestern Ghana. The Nzema State was formerly called the Kingdom of Appolonia.

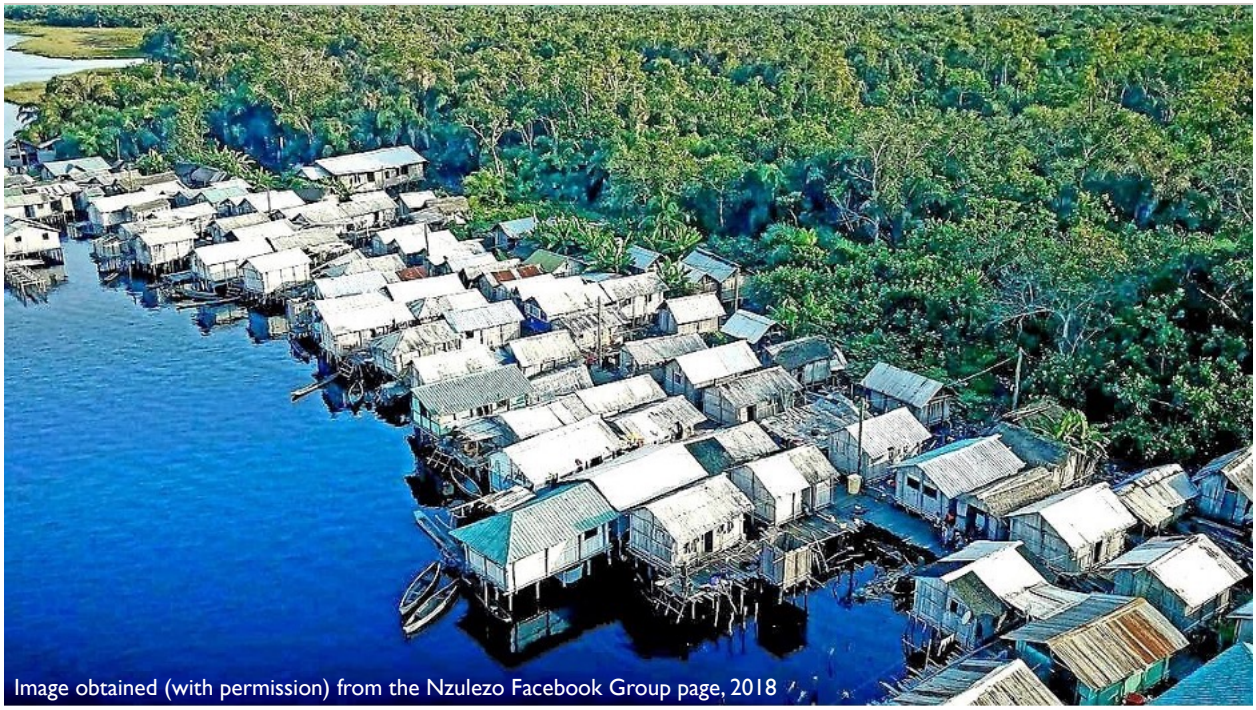
[3] For the history of Ganvié, see Elisée Soumonni, "Lacustrine Villages in South Benin as Refuges from the Slave Trade," in *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies*, ed. Sylviane A. Diouf (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003), 3–14.

[4] Personal observations living in the Nzulezo community during the summers of 2017 and 2018.

[5] Agya Kulu (elder of Nzulezo), Joshua Ezoa (Nzulezo linguist), and Akwasi Eba (Nzulezo resident) in separate interviews with the author, July 2017, at Nzulezo.

this ecological space since the mid-eighteenth century, enduring challenging environmental conditions like seasonal flooding and unfavorable historical events like the transatlantic slave trade.[6] This study examines why the Nzulezo decided to live on water, as opposed to land, and how they have weathered the test of time, by asking three main questions: Who are the Nzulezo

Figure 1: An Aerial View of the Nzulezo Community



people? Why did the people choose to settle on the Amanzule River? And how does Nzulezo history allow us to broadly understand the centrality of water in African historiography?

Drawing on newly available oral histories and material culture from Nzulezo, as well as European (British and Dutch) archival records, European travelers accounts, slave trade exportation data from the www.slavevoyages.org, I argue that Nzulezo people originated from an undetermined place in the savannah region of Western Africa sometime in the second half of the

[6] John Arthur, Agya Kulu, and Joshua Ezoa in separate interviews with the author, July 2017, at Nzulezo.

seventeenth century.[7] A vulnerable group, the people moved to the Gold Coast in the early eighteenth century in search of "security" and a better livelihood.[8] Their pursuit brought them to the cusp of a new reality and a world rife with unparalleled relationships of power, the emergence of new polities, and a booming trade in human beings. To survive this new reality, Nzulezo people required more than "security" and "refuge" from the instability of that era. They relied heavily on their environment (water), spirituality, and adroit socio-economic strategies to construct a livelihood on water. Thus, living in the middle of the Amanzule River became a necessary and concerted choice informed by Nzulezo spiritual beliefs and their prudent appropriation of the physical environment. In this untold story, I explore the themes of migration and human settlement (chapters 1 and 2), slavery (chapter 3), the environment and spirituality (running through all chapters), and gender (chapters 4 and 5), all of which form the building blocks of my narrative.

My dissertation makes three major theoretical contributions to African environmental historiography and slave trade studies in Africa. First, it reconsiders Elisee Soumonni's (2003) monocausal thesis that pre-colonial Africans constructed settlements in the middle of bodies of water primarily as a defense mechanism against the Atlantic slave trade—i.e., to escape being captured and sold into slavery.[9] In the case of Nzulezo, oral tradition explains that the people's quest to access freshwater, its edible and non-edible resources, and to meet the religious demands of their snail deity, *evu*, impelled them to establish their community in the middle of the

[7] Nana Takrika VII (chief of Nzulezo), Joshua Ezoa, Safohyenle Kwame (Nzulezo elder), Agya Kulu, and Agya Emuah (Nzulezo elder) in multiple interviews with the author, July 2018, December 2019, and February 2020, at Nzulezo. Also see "Extracts from Report on Apollonia District, 1809," Furley Collection N86 1800–1872, The Balme Library, University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana.
[8] Nana Takrika VII, Joshua Ezoa, Safohyenle Kwame, Agya Kulu, and Agya Emuah in multiple interviews with the author, July 2018, December 2019, and February 2020, at Nzulezo.
[9] Soumonni, "Lacustrine Villages in South Benin as Refuges from the Slave Trade," 3-14.

Amanzule River.[10] These findings challenge Soumonni's theory by demonstrating the centrality of environmental and religious/spiritual factors in shaping pre-colonial West Africans' choice of settlement locations. They also allow us to see pre-colonial West Africans in greater complexity and to understand the lives of individuals beyond and outside the frame of the slave trade.

Additionally, "Living with Water" reconsiders conventional approaches in African environmental history that historicize the African environment solely from a land-centric viewpoint. As notable water historians like Heather Hoag and Matthew Bender suggest, the term *landscape* or the *land-centric* method represents the African environment as an unchanging expanse of dry land.[11] However, Africa's ecology and the environmental history of Africa have "not been as dry as the term landscape connotes."[12] Therefore, in this dissertation, I re-center water in the symbiotic relationships between humans and their environment and argue for a shift in the focus of research in water-based areas like Nzulezo. I demonstrate the position of water as both an agent and a context for understanding how riverine communities such as Nzulezo forged dynamic relationships with their environment. This is evident in how groups develop water-based belief systems and social identities, as reflected in the name *Nzulezo*, which translates to "the people on water."

Finally, by demonstrating the role of large rivers in preventing slave trade activities within Appolonia (i.e., the territory where Nzulezo was established), especially between mid-1700 and 1830, my dissertation fills an important gap in the study of slavery in Africa, by asking the question, why did the coastal region of present-day Ivory Coast (historically known as the

[10] Nana Takrika VII, John Arthur, Agya Kulu, and Joshua Ezoa in separate interviews with the author, July 2017, at Nzulezo.
[11] Heather J. Hoag, *Developing the Rivers of East and West Africa: An Environmental History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 4; Matthew V. Bender, *Water Brings No Harm: Management Knowledge and the Struggle for the Waters of Kilimanjaro* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2019), 4-5.
[12] Hoag, *Developing the Rivers of East and West Africa*, 4.

Quaqua Coast), comprising territories like Grand Bassam and Assini, experience less slave-trading activities and exports? Although the scholarship on slavery and the Atlantic slave trade in West Africa is dense, it does not address the above question. My dissertation attempts to answer this question by demonstrating how the interplay of spirituality and large water bodies helped to minimize slave-trading activities in Appolonia, which bordered the Quaqua Coast to the east. Through this approach, I highlight the critical position of the environment (precisely, waterbodies) in fighting against the Atlantic slave trade in West Africa.

Locating Nzulezo in Historical Canon

Although a few writers reference Nzulezo in their writings, Nzulezo and its people largely remain invisible in African historiography. While early European writers such as Henry Meredith and Brodie Cruickshank tacitly mention Nzulezo in their observations of historical events in Appolonia, these references have barely placed Nzulezo in critical historical discourses.[13] This lacuna has not been corrected by African(ist) scholars of the Gold Coast and Appolonia, such as Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang, Martha Alibah, and Pierluigi Valseechi, who have pithily explored Nzulezo's history in their scholarship. For instance, in *Where There Is No Silence*, Opoku-Agyemang dedicates about seven out of sixty-one pages to providing a transcript of oral traditions on Nzulezo people's origin and migration history.[14] Likewise, in discussing the rise and evolution of the Kingdom of Appolonia, Valsecchi devotes a few paragraphs to sketchily explain Nzulezo's position in the early eighteenth-century Appolonia.[15] Although salutary, these scholarly investigations fail to reveal Nzulezo's critical position in Appolonian

[13] Henry Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa; with a Brief History of the African Company.* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1812); Brodie Cruickshank, "The Expedition to Appolonia, 1848," MS 173088, Gold Coast Papers. Special Collections, School of Oriental and African Studies Library, London, UK.
[14] Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang, *Where There Is No Silence: Articulations of Resistance to Enslavement* (Accra, Ghana: Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2008), 37-44.
[15] Pierluigi Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa: Appolonia from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 45, 48-50, 209.

and Gold Coast historiography primarily because the writers treat Nzulezo history as tangential to the Appolonian and Gold Coast past.

The reason for Nzulezo's invisibility in the literature is unknown, but one could hazard a guess that the community's seclusion and hard-to-access environment served to disincentivize scholars who study this region from accessing Nzulezo's rich histories and material culture. As a result, the community's history remains buried in the village, waiting on researchers to collaborate with Nzulezo people to critically unpack and situate Nzulezo in Africa history. I have had the opportunity to work with Nzulezo people to interrogate their past from both a socio-cultural and environmental standpoint. The result of this scholarly engagement is a social and environmental history that reveals how human interactions with bodies of water over time resulted in complex relationships between culture and ecology. This history also demonstrates how such relationships often shaped ideas about community identity, spirituality, gender, and human adaptation to slavery and physically challenging environments.

Locating "Living with Water" in African Environmental Historiography

Since its inception as a historical subfield of inquiry in the 1960s, African environmental history has positioned itself in opposition to existing Eurocentric orthodoxies that tend to misrepresent Africans, the African environment, and the relationship between the two.[16] One such orthodoxy is the portrayal of African groups as naïve and passive historical actors, who destroyed their own physical environment because they lacked the proper knowledge and technology.[17] Writing against these misconceptions, African environmental historians have broadly centered their research around two major historiographical themes: the human-

[16] Gregory H. Maddox, "Africa and Environmental History," *Environmental History* 4, no. 2 (1999), 162.
[17] Maurice Amutabi, "The Role of Indigenous Knowledge in Environmental Conservation in Africa: The Case of the Abaluyia in Western Kenya," in *Landscape, Environment and Technology in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*, ed. Toyin Falola and Emily Brownell (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), 229-2230.

environment relationship and the conservation and degradation discourse or the "imperial encounter," as framed by historian Gregory Maddox.[18]

The imperial encounter highlights European's diverse interactions with African peoples and the African environment, which often resulted in the former's usurping of Africa's natural and mineral resources.[19] Research done in this area has predominantly centered issues of conservation and degradation of the African environment—the soil, wildlife, water, and forest.[20] In the conservation-degradation discourse, Europeans perceived Africans as incapable of managing their ecology; and as a result, colonial regimes sought to apply "remedial" policies to salvage what they perceived as an environmental collapse in Africa.[21] The colonial conservationist policies levied upon African societies reflected western conceptions of preservation, which sought to disrupt and, in some cases, terminate the dynamic relationships that these societies previously cultivated with their physical environment.[22]

Scholars who engage in this discourse, including Helge Kjekshus, Jamie Monson, William Beinart, James Giblin, and Gregory Maddox, use sources such as oral histories, European colonial archival records, and African governmental archives to historicize the African environment. However, because of their overwhelming attention to Africa's landscapes, these scholars tend to overly rely heavily on the land-centric method in explaining Africans'

[18] Maddox, "Africa and Environmental History," 163-64.
[19] Maddox, "Africa and Environmental History," 162.
[20] Ibid. For further reading, see Helge Kjekshus, *Ecology Control & Economic Development in East African History: The Case of Tanganyika 1850-1950* (James Currey, 1996); William Beinart, "Soil Erosion, Conservationism and Ideas about Development: A Southern African Exploration, 1900-1960," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 11, no. 1 (1984): 52–83; James McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land: An Environmental History of Africa, 1800-1990* (Boydell & Brewer, Limited, 1999); Gregory Maddox, James Giblin, and Isaria N. Kimambo, eds., *Custodians of the Land: Ecology and Culture in the History of Tanzania* (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 1996).
[21] Maddox, "Africa and Environmental History," 164; Kjekshus, *Ecology Control & Economic Development in East African History*, 18.
[22] Ibid.

encounters with European groups over the environment. Notable works in this area, in addition to the aforementioned ones, include Maddox's, Giblin's, and Kimambo's edited volume, *Custodian of the Land*, Kjekshus' *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East Africa*, and *The Rise of Conservation in South Africa* by William Beinart.[23]

On the other hand, the human-environment relationship theme explores the long-term interactions between African communities and their physical environment and how such interactions mutually constructed each other.[24] The theoretical methods employed in this scholarly engagement have differed: while some scholars, including Sharon Nicholson, George Brooks, and James Webb, used climatological analysis as a guide, historians like James McCann, James McCann, and Lamar and Thompson, relied on overt agricultural practices, as well as comparative and transregional approaches, to examine Africans' complex relationships with their ecology.[25]

For example, in *People of the Plow*, James McCann examines progressive changes in the 1980s environmental crisis of the Ethiopian highlands, using agricultural practices as an

[23] William Beinart, *The Rise of Conservation in South Africa: Settlers, Livestock, and the Environment 1770-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 2008); Maddox, Giblin, and Kimambo, *Custodians of the Land*; Kjekshus, *Ecology Control & Economic Development in East African History*; David Anderson and Richard H. Grove, eds., *Conservation in Africa: Peoples, Policies and Practice* (Cambridge; UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987); James Giblin, *The Politics of Environmental Control in Northeastern Tanzania, 1840-1940* (Philadelphia: Univ of Pennsylvania Press, 1992); William Beinart and Peter Coates, *Environment and History: The Taming of Nature in the USA and South Africa* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995); F. F. G. Sutton, "Towards a History of Cultivating the Fields," *Azania* 24 (1989): 98–112.

[24] Maddox, "Africa and Environmental History," 163.

[25] See Sharon E. Nicholson, *Dryland Climatology* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Sharon E. Nicholson, "The Methodology of Historical Climate Reconstruction and Its Application to Africa," *The Journal of African History* 20, no. 1 (January 1979): 31–49; Sharon E. Nicholson, "Climate of the Sahel and West Africa," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Climate Science*, September 26, 2018; George Brooks, *Western Africa to C1860 A.D.: A Provisional Historical Schema Based on Climate Periods* (Bloomington, IN: African Studies Program, Indiana University, 1985); James Webb, Jr., *Desert Frontier: Ecological and Economic Change Along the Western Sahel, 1600-1850* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995); James C. McCann, "Climate and Causation in African History," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 32, no. 2/3 (1999): 261–79; Howard Roberts Lamar and Leonard Monteath Thompson, eds., *The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

analytical lens.[26] Focusing on the social and ecological implications of ox-plow technology, McCann explains the intersectionality of society, demography, technology, and the environment in highland Ethiopia.[27] Robert Harms, on the other hand, uses water (i.e., the Zaire River) as a historical context for understanding the cultural and social change in the Nunu society from the pre-colonial era to the colonial period.[28] From an environmental standpoint, Harms argues that the pre-colonial Nunu livelihood predominantly revolved around water, which shaped settlement patterns, the moral economy, and the social structure of the Nunu society.[29]

"Living with Water" encapsulates the human-environment relationship theme because it critically explores the dynamic relationships between Nzulezo people and the Amanzule River, revealing the intersectionality of water, spirituality, and the built environment in Nzulezo history. My dissertation places water at the center of historical analysis, deviating from land-centric traditions that privilege the *land* over other components of the physical environment. For its comprehensive historicization of the Amanzule River, "Living with Water" also falls within the literary genre of African water history. It draws on theoretical concepts in African water historiography, including "eco-social history," "eco-cultural history," and "waterscape" histories to explain the position of the Amanzule River in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Nzulezo and Appolonian history.[30]

The term "eco-social history" was used by historian Emmanuel Akyeampong to represent

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[26] James McCann, *People of the Plow: An Agricultural History of Ethiopia, 1800-1990, James C. McCann* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995).
[27] Ibid.
[28] Robert Harms, *Games against Nature: An Eco-Cultural History of the Nunu of Equatorial Africa* (Cambridge Cambridgeshire; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[29] Ibid.
[30] "Eco-social history" and "eco-cultural history" have respectively been popularized by historians Emmanuel Akyeampong and Robert Harms, while Heather Hoag and Matthew Bender have promoted "waterscapes." See Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong, *Between the Sea and the Lagoon: An Eco-Social History of the Anlo of Southeastern Ghana, c.1850 to Recent Times* (Athens; Oxford England: James Currey, 2002); Harms, *Games against Nature*; Hoag, *Developing the Rivers of East and West Africa*; Bender, *Water Brings No Harm*.

a history that stresses the dynamic and symbiotic relationship between people and their social environment.[31] Robert Harms explains "eco-cultural history" as one that emphasizes the complex relationship between ecology and culture.[32] In this dissertation, I draw on these theories to illuminate the social and cultural dimensions of Nzulezo people's multilayered relationships with their ecological space. For instance, the Nzulezo water space is culturally and socially constructed along gender lines. In the community, older men and women have different areas where they bathe and congregate to perform ritual rites.[33] Menstruating females moved further away from the community into the raffia palm vegetation to take their bath, lest they offend the Amanzule River deity by "contaminating" sacred objects and spaces with menstrual blood.[34] Like the pre-colonial Asante and Fante societies of the Gold Coast, Nzulezo people viewed menstrual blood as spiritually "unclean" fluid because the Amanzule River god abhored this fertility fluid.[35] By utilizing eco-social and eco-cultural history frameworks, I am able to critically interrogate Nzulezo people's relationships with their ecological space and how those relationships shaped their social and cultural livelihood.

Bodies of water may be bound by land, but their influence extend far beyond their banks. For this reason, water historians such as Heather Hoag and Matthew Bender juxtapose *waterscape* as a theoretical concept in opposition to *landscape* to explain the lives and histories

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[31] Akyeampong, *Between the Sea and the Lagoon*, 4.
[32] Harms, *Games against Nature*, 3; Hoag, *Developing the Rivers of East and West Africa*, 5-6; Bender, *Water Brings No Harm*, 6.
[33] Nana Takrika VII (chief of Nzulezo), Nathaniel Ako (Nzulezo resident), Akwasi Eba (Nzulezo resident), and John Arthur (official oral historian of Nzulezo) in multiple interviews with the author, June 24 - July 6, 2018, in Nzulezo.
[34] Mary Akuba Ackah (female Nzulezo resident), Gifty Adwuba Kulu (female Nzulezo resident), and Maame Nyama (female Nzulezo resident) in multiple interviews with the author, June – July 2018, in Nzulezo.
[35] Ibid. For readings on menstruation in African historiography, see Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong, *Drink, Power, and Cultural Change: A Social History of Alcohol in Ghana, C. 1800 to Recent Times* (Portsmouth, NH: Boydell & Brewer, Limited, 1996); E. Frances White, "Women in West and West-Central Africa," in *Women in Sub-Saharan Africa: Restoring Women to History*, ed. Iris Berger and E. Frances White (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 63–130; Chris Bobel et al., eds., "Personal Narrative: Let Girls Be Girls - My Journey into Forced Womanhood," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Menstruation Studies* (New York, NY: Springer Nature, 2020), 93–97.

of populations in geographical regions where bodies of water dominate and serve as foundations for their biological, socio-cultural, and economic systems.[36] Waterscape refers to how people "see" water.[37] What people see is dependent on time, place, and perspective; therefore, waterscapes offer the conceptual framework for understanding and appreciating how water intersects with the needs and expectations of people who depend on it.[38] In this dissertation, I use waterscape as a framework for reimagining how the pre-colonial people of Nzulezo and Appolonia viewed, understood, and interacted with bodies of water, particularly the Amanzule River. The Amanzule River served different functions during different historical periods. For instance, the river served as a spiritual habitation for some Appolonian deities and as a source of freshwater for Nzulezo people and Appolonians.[39] A critical examination of how the people of Nzulezo and Appolonia interacted with the Amanzule River lends critical insight into their religious, economic, and socio-cultural beliefs, often conveyed through folktales, proverbs, and songs. The *waterscape* framework, therefore, helps to cast water as a significant historical force in shaping the human world.

Research Site and Periodization of the Study

As earlier referenced, the Nzulezo community is located within the pre-colonial Kingdom of Appolonia in the southwestern part of the Gold Coast. The Kingdom of Appolonia, currently known as the Nzema State, was formed from the amalgamation of small villages in the late seventeenth century.[40] It, however, crystalized into a formidable polity in the first decade of the eighteenth century.[41] The Appolonian territory stretched from the Ankobra River in the east to

[36] Hoag, *Developing the Rivers of East and West Africa*, 4; Bender, *Water Brings No Harm*, 9.
[37] Bender, *Water Brings No Harm*, 9.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Joshua Ezoah (Nzulezo linguist), in an interview with the author, June 17, 2018, in Nzulezo.
[40] Pierluigi Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation*, 19.
[41] Ibid.

the Tanoe River (also spelled as Tano) in the west, covering about 90 kilometers of ground distance—see Figure 2 below.[42] The kingdom is heavily watered: besides the Ankobra and Tano Rivers, which border Appolonia to the east and west, respectively, the Atlantic Sea covers the kingdom's southern frontier. Within the territory, there are several streams and rivers, including the Bia, Fia, and Amanzule Rivers.[43] Nzulezo people constructed their settlement in the middle of the Amanzule River.

Figure 2: An Eighteenth-century Map of Appolonia Designed by D'Anville

Copyright: map obtained from the Special Collections of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom. The red arrow points to the Kingdom of Appolonia.

Throughout the eighteenth century, the leaders of Appolonia, including Anɔ Bile (who is

[42] J. Y. Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema" (M.A. Thesis, Accra: GH, University of Ghana, Legon, 1965), 6-7; Pierluigi Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation*, 25. Information about the ground distance was based on Google Maps estimates.
[43] Valsecchi discusses the topography of Appolonia in *Power and State Formation*, 41-58. I have also visited many of these bodies of water during my field research in Appolonia, especially during the summers of 2017, 2018, and 2022.

believed to have ruled during the early eighteenth century) and Amihyia Kpanyinli (c. 1758-1779) allowed several migrant groups such as the peoples of Nkroful, Essiama, and Nzulezo to settle within Appolonia.[44] Nzulezo people were believed to have arrived during the reign of Amihyia Kpanyinli.[45] Once settled in Appolonia and on the Amanzule River, Nzulezo people maintained a distinctive position relative to surrounding Appolonian communities through their unique geographical location (on water) and their ability to maintain navigable routes along and around the Amanzule River, which facilitated the transportation of goods and people within the kingdom.[46] The community also became a major supplier of tilapia and other aquatic food to the people of Appolonia, especially during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[47] Additionally, during times of war, the Nzulezo community served as a hiding place for Appolonian kings and Appolonians of the coastal towns like Beyin, Ekabaku, and Ngelekazo.[48] King Kaku Aka's hiding in Nzulezo during the 1835 and 1848 British expeditions in Appolonia are good examples of Nzulezo serving as a place of refuge—King Aka ruled from 1834 to 1848.[49]

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[44] Joseph Whyte (resident of Beyin in his seventies), Mary Assyne (resident of Beyin in her late sixties), Safohyenle Kabenla Enlu (elder of the Atuabo town), and Nana Kwame (priest who resides at Nkroful) in separate interviews with the author, summers of 2018 and 2022, in Anyinase, Atuabo, Beyin, and Nkroful (all in Appolonia). J. Y. Ackah, Martha Alibah, P. Valsecchi also discuss the ancestral migrations of the people from the above-mentioned towns to pre-colonial Appolonia. See Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 10-12, Appendix 2; Martha Alibah, "A History of the Nzema from the Pre-Colonial to the Colonial Era" (PhD Thesis, Cape Coast, Ghana, University of Cape Coast, 2005), 5-29; Martha Alibah, *A History of the Nzema in Pre-Colonial Ghana* (Accra: GH: Woeli Publishing Services, 2013), 17; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 9-10, 46-47.

[45] Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa*, 53-54*;* Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 48.

[46] Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 49.

[47] Ibid. Nzulezo Oral traditions also support this claim. John Arthur (Nzulezo oral historian), Joshua Ezoa, Safohyenle Kwame, and Maame Adwoba Ezoa in separate interviews with the author, July 2018 and August 2022, at Nzulezo.

[48] John Arthur and Joshua Ezoah in separate interviews with the author, July 2018, in Nzulezo. Also see Brodie Cruickshank, "The Expedition to Appolonia, 1848," MS 173088, Gold Coast Papers. Special Collections, School of Oriental and African Studies Library, London, UK. Excerpts of Cruickshank's memoir is also found at PRAAD, Accra branch, under the serial ADM 1/2/4 – "Gold Coast Dispatches from Governor to Secretary of State." J. Y. Ackah and P. Valsecchi discuss this phenomenon in Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 132; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 49-50.

[49] Brodie Cruickshank, "The Expedition to Appolonia, 1848," MS 173088, Gold Coast Papers. Special Collections, School of Oriental and African Studies Library, London, UK; Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," Appendix 2, p. 5; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 49-50.

Given Nzulezo's critical position in Appolonia's political economy, it is impossible to examine Nzulezo's history in isolation from Appolonia's and the regional history of the southwestern Gold Coast. Therefore, this dissertation takes a broader view of Nzulezo's history by looking at how grand historical events in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gold Coast, such as human migrations and settlements, state formation processes, and the transatlantic slave trade shaped the history of Appolonia and Nzulezo. The dissertation is set between the mid-1700 and the mid-1800 because the mid-1700 represents the time when the people of Nzulezo came to Appolonia.[50] In an attempt to identify the origins of Nzulezo people, I examine the historical antecedents in the pre-mid-1700 era that connect Nzulezo people to the itinerant Dyula and other Mande groups of Western Africa. This historical examination allows me to explore the migrations of the Nzulezo people from the Middle Niger (of Western Africa) to their present location in southwestern Gold Coast. These migrations are believed to have spanned the second half of the seventeenth century through the early eighteenth century.

1848 also marks a significant turning point in the history of Appolonia, as it signifies the overthrow of the last pre-colonial Appolonian monarch, King Kaku Aka, and the beginning of direct British meddling in Appolonian socio-political and economic affairs.[51] As mentioned above, in 1835 and 1848, the British colonial government on the Gold Coast launched vicious

[50] Henry Meredith discusses Nzulezo's early encounters with the Appolonian King Amihyia Kpanyinli whose reign spanned mid-1700 through 1800. J. Y. Ackah and Martha Alibah disagree on the years of King Amihyia's reign. Whereas Alibah suggests 1400 to 1450, Ackah argues for the mid-1700-1800 date. I share J. Y. Ackah's belief because historical records show that King Amihyia supervised the construction of the British fortress, Fort Appolonia, in Beyin which was completed in the 1760s. If King Amihyia ruled between 1400 and 1450 as Martha Alibah suggests, how could he have supervised the building of Fort Appolonia? See Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa; with a Brief History of the African Company*, 30; Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 4-12; Alibah, "A History of the Nzema from the Pre-Colonial to the Colonial Era" 17.

[51] See Pierluigi Valsecchi, "The Fall of Kaku Aka: Social and Political Change in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century Western Gold Coast," *Journal of West African History* 2, no. 1 (2016): 1–25; Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 72-138.

military attacks on Appolonia to dethrone its perceived "wicked" monarch Kaku Aka.[52] The 1835 attack failed, but the 1848 yielded in Kaku Aka's overthrow, arrest, and subsequent detention at the Cape Coast Castle, where he later died in 1851.[53] Kaku Aka's overthrow created a political vacuum in Appolonia—a vacant throne—which attracted intense political competition between two Appolonian royals, Amakyi and Avo.[54] This competition resulted in a bloody four-year civil war in Appolonia, which lasted from 1869 to 1873.[55] This war led to the split of the kingdom into two unequal halves: Eastern and Western Appolonia, with the former being the larger in land size and population.[56]

Following the 1848 British invasion and its ensuing civil war, Appolonia never returned to its past renown as the most powerful polity on the southwestern Gold Coast, as described by Pierluigi Valsecchi.[57] The erstwhile formidable polity that precluded direct European influence in its internal political and economic affairs gave way to a relatively fragile and divided kingdom that came under direct British protection and control.[58] In my view, the 1848 invasion marked the beginning of European colonialism—or proto-colonialism, to mildly frame it—in Appolonia, albeit historians J. Y. Ackah and Pierluigi Valsecchi and anthropologist Mariano Pavanello contend that 1873/74 signifies the official British colonialism of Appolonia.[59] The 1873/74 date

[52] F. Swanzy, "Narrative of the Expedition to Appolonia, from Cape Coast Castle, in 1848. CO 96/27, "Colonial Office Papers," The National Archives (hereafter referenced as TNA), London, United Kingdom; F. Swanzy, "Minutes of Evidence Taken before the Select Committee on West Coast of Africa; together with the minutes of evidence, appendix, and index. Part I.—Report and evidence, April 29, 1842 (904). 551 551-II, United Kingdom Parliamentary Papers, "19th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers," London, United Kingdom.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] On the Appolonian civil war, see Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 150-188; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 23; Mariano Pavanello, "Pawnship and Domestic Slavery in Chieftaincy Disputes (Nzema Area, Sw Ghana)," *Africa* 1, no. 1 (2019), 69–86.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 50-57.
[58] Valsecchi, "The Fall of Kaku Aka," 21-22.
[59] See Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 72-188; Valsecchi, "The Fall of Kaku Aka," 1-25; Pavanello, "Pawnship and Domestic Slavery in Chieftaincy Disputes (Nzema Area, Sw Ghana)," 69–86.

neatly dovetails with the British-Fante coalition army's decisive defeat of the Asante Empire in 1873/74, ushering in formal British colonialism in the coastal and hinterland regions of the Gold Coast.[60] Indeed, the British officially took control of most Gold Coast territories in 1873-74. However, some three decades earlier (i.e., following 1848), Appolonia had fallen to the British.

This dissertation's historical timeframe (mid-1700 to mid-1800) allows me to explore about 100 years of continuities and discontinuities in Nzulezo history from the time Nzulezo people settled in Appolonia (i.e., the mid-1700s) to the eve of European "proto-colonialism" of Appolonia in 1848. This timeframe also allows me to critically explore the intersectionality of slavery and the Atlantic slave trade, spirituality, and the environment in the Nzulezo and Appolonian past.

Sources and Method

This study is based on four research stays in Ghana and one in the United Kingdom between 2017 and 2022. I blended methodologies in history (i.e., oral history and archival research), anthropology (ethnography), and geography (community mapping) to garner a wide array of sources, including oral histories, material culture, and European archival records. These methodologies have proven useful for the writing of Nzulezo history.

I employed community mapping—an approach that engages the residents of a community in identifying assets of their environment and creating a picture of what it was/is like to live within that environment—to retrace ancestral migrations and human settlements in

[60] On the 1873/74 Anglo-Asante War, see Larry W. Yarak, *Asante and the Dutch, 1744-1873* (Oxford England: New York: Clarendon Press, 1990); Edward M. Spiers, "Wolseley and Ashanti: The Ashanti War Journal and Correspondence of Major General Sir Garnet Wolseley, 1873-1874," *The Journal of Military History* 74, no. 1 (2010): 253; Ryan Patterson, "The Third Anglo-Asante War, 1873-1874," in *Queen Victoria's Wars: British Military Campaigns, 1857–1902*, ed. Stephen M. Miller (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 106–25; Thomas E. Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee* (London: UK: John Murray, 1819); T. C. McCaskie, *State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante* (Cambridge: UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995); W. E. F. Ward, *A History of Ghana*, 4th edition (George Allen & Unwin, 1959).

Nzulezo and the Kingdom of Appolonia.[61] It was not uncommon for my research participants to trace their ancestral histories using key features of the Appolonian environment and historical markers such as the regimes of rulers. For instance, in my conversations with some residents of Anyinase, a town in Appolonia, I learned that the ancestors of Anyinase originated from an unknown community in present-day Ivory Coast and settled in their present location well before the reign of King Kaku Aka (c. 1835-1848).[62] During their migration, the people sojourned in the Appolonian towns of Beyin and Atuabo before settling in Anyinase.[63] Oral tradition relates that the Anyinase migrants constructed a relatively small settlement under a giant *onyina* tree (*Ceiba pentandra*), which they called *anyinase*—meaning, *onyina ase*, under the *onyina* tree.[64] The community mapping approach elicited stories such as the above, which helped in the reconstruction of Nzulezo people's origin and migration history from the Middle Niger to the Gold Coast.

Archival Research

With support from the Fulbright-Hays DDRA Fellowship, Charlotte W. Newcombe Fellowship, Michigan State University's (MSU) History Department's and College of Social Science's Scholars Research Awards, as well as MSU's GJEC Fellowships, I garnered eighteenth and nineteenth-century British and Dutch sources, as well as unpublished theses, from different institutional archives in Ghana, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Specifically, I studied British colonial secretary's and office records on pre-colonial Gold Coast, stored in the Ghana Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) offices

[61] Jackie Amsden and Rob VanWynsberghe, "Community Mapping as a Research Tool with Youth," *Action Research* 3, no. 4 (December 1, 2005): 357–81; Diane Dorfman, "Mapping Community Assets Workbook," *Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory*, 1998, 9.
[62] Auntie Mary and Ohemaa Maame Nyaama (queen of Anyinase) in separate interviews with the author, June 2018 and August 2022, at Anyinase and Beyin. Also see J. Y. Ackah, "Kaku Aka and the Split of Nzema," Appendix 2.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.

in Accra, Kumasi, Cape Coast, and Secondi-Takoradi. These records, particularly the ADM 1/2 and ADM 1/5 files, offer a rich history of European political and economic activities in pre-colonial Gold Coast. The records also discuss European multifaceted relationships with some Gold Coast societies, especially Appolonia. These sources allowed me to situate Nzulezo and Appolonia within the broader pre-colonial Gold Coast political economy.

I also consulted unpublished theses and Dutch records that reveal a rich Appolonian and Nzulezo past. Notable among these documents were the Furley Collection, a Dutch record in the Special Collections of the Balme Library in the University of Ghana (UG), Legon, as well as J. Y. Ackah's M. A. thesis titled, "Kaku Aka and the Split of Nzema," also found at the Institute of African Studies Library at UG, Legon. A seminal text, Ackah's thesis examines the origins of the Appolonian Kingdom from its early kings to the nineteenth-century King Kaku Aka. I draw on this thesis to explain relevant concepts and themes, such as the *amonle* ritual, in Nzulezo's and Appolonia's history, discussed in chapters two and three of this dissertation.

In the United Kingdom, I visited six different repositories, including the British National Archives, and the special collections of the British Library, Bodleian Library (University of Oxford), SOAS Library (University of London), and the University of Reading Library. These archives boast a rich collection of British sources, comprising the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century correspondence of the English Company of Merchants, as well as the memoirs and travelogues of Europeans who once lived in, or transited through, the Gold Coast. For example, the complete memoir of Brodie Cruickshank, a Scottish merchant who became Acting Governor of the Gold Coast in 1853, is rich with information on the 1848 British expedition to Appolonia,

as well as the political conditions in Appolonia in the mid-nineteenth century.[65] Cruikshank's memoir is housed in the Special Collection of the SOAS Library, and was an important source for periodizing Nzulezo people's stay on the Amanzule River, which I discuss in chapter four.

In 1750, the British parliament passed the African Company Act, which led to the establishment of the African Company of Merchants (also known as the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa), a British chartered company that operated on the Gold Coast from 1752 to 1821.[66] Replacing the Royal African Company, the African Company of Merchants served as the official British corporation for trading and shipping enslaved people from the Gold Coast to the Americas.[67] The British National Archives holds a rich collection of the records of this British company. Specifically, the documents in the T70 serial, as well as those in the CO (colonial office records), discuss British trading positions on the Gold Coast and their political and economic interest in Appolonia. I draw on these records to analyze Nzulezo's and Appolonia's complex relationship with the British and other European groups on the Gold Coast in chapters two and three. I also blend these sources with slave exportation data from the Gold Coast obtained from the Slave Voyages database to explain Appolonia's position in the Gold Coast slave trade economy. Together, these sources reveal that Appolonia was not heavily involved in the transatlantic slave trade, as were other pre-colonial Gold Coast towns like Anomabo, Elmina,

[65] Brodie Cruickshank, "The Expedition to Appolonia, 1848," MS 173088, Gold Coast Papers. Special Collections, School of Oriental and African Studies Library, London, UK. Excerpts of Cruickshank's memoir is also found at PRAAD, Accra branch, under the serial ADM 1/2/4 – "Gold Coast Dispatches from Governor to Secretary of State." For information on Brodie Cruickshank, see Brodie Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast of Africa: Including an Account of the Native Tribes, and Their Intercourse with Europeans* (London, UK: Hurst and Blackett, 1853); Pierluigi Valsecchi, "Free People, Slaves and Pawns in the Western Gold Coast: The Demography of Dependency in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century British Archival Source," *Ghana Studies* 17, no. 1 (2014), 224.
[66] See K. G. Davies, *The Royal African Company* (London; New York: Longmans, Green, 1957).
[67] See J. J. Crooks, *Records Relating to the Gold Coast Settlements from 1750 to 1874* (London, UK: Cass Publishers, 1973); Rebecca Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Boydell & Brewer, 2014); Randy J. Sparks, *Where the Negroes Are Masters: An African Port in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

and Cape Coast, because the kingdom's economy was not dependent on the slave trade. This finding positions Appolonia and Nzulezo as outliers in the Gold Coast slave trade economy.

Finally, I draw on *Asantesem*, a collection of oral traditions on the pre-colonial history of the Asante Kingdom, in discussing Nzulezo's and Appolonia's history. *Asantesem* provides useful historical data on Asante's relations with Appolonia during the first half of the nineteenth century and demonstrates Asante's involvement in the 1869-1873 Appolonian civil war.[68] This record is housed in the Special Collections of the Northwestern University Library.

Ethnographic Research

Examining Nzulezo people's life on the river and their historical position in Appolonia and the Gold Coast, I rely heavily on oral histories and material culture from the Nzulezo community and other Appolonia towns, including Beyin, Atuabo, Nkroful, and Essiama. Towards this end, I spent about one-and-a-half years conducting ethnographic research in Nzulezo and Appolonia. I am a Ghanaian by nationality and an Akan by ethnicity. Born and raised in Ghana, I am fluent in multiple Ghanaian languages, including Twi, Fante, and West African Pidgin. I have also learned Nzema—the language of the people of Nzulezo and Appolonia. These languages are widely spoken in Nzulezo and Appolonia. I was, therefore, able to use these languages in garnering oral histories.

During my initial visit to Appolonia and Nzulezo in 2017, I introduced myself and my project to the current paramount chief of Western Nzema, Awulae Annor Adjaye II, as well as the elders of Nzulezo. The Nzulezo community leaders poured libation to the Nzulezo river god called *Amanzule* and accepted me as a "son" of the community. This admission allowed me to conduct over 180 oral interviews with over 300 individuals in Nzulezo, Appolonia, and other

[68] See "Asantesem: The Asante Biography Project," *Northwestern University*, June 1978.

towns in southern Ghana. It also enabled me to participate in several quotidian activities of the Nzulezo people like fishing and palm wine production. Through these experiences, I was privileged to closely observe and engage in Nzulezo's way of life and garner oral histories, including life histories, family stories, and folktale. I also collected material culture, such as Nzulezo dug-out canoes and stilt houses, which, blended with the oral histories, contributed to the study and writing of the Nzulezo's history.

Through topical interviews, life histories, and testimonials, Nzulezo people taught me aspects of their lives and history, including spirituality, gender, and enslavement. I learned of folktales that reveal the people's pre-colonial settlement patterns and their life choices and approaches to dealing with unfavorable environmental conditions like flooding and wildfire. While these oral histories required careful attention to context and narrator's biases, they were crucial in interpreting Nzulezo people's lived experiences through the worldviews and positionalities of the people.

My interviewing involved interacting with both men and women. I intentionally selected research participants whose ages ranged between thirty and ninety years because I found this group, especially individuals who were 60 years and above, to be more knowledgeable about the pre-colonial history of Nzulezo and Appolonia. While research participants below the age of 60, particularly the men, were eager to share their experiences in constructing stilt houses in the Nzulezo community, those above 60 years old, were better at remembering historical events handed down by their parents and parents' parents. For instance, in an interview with Auntie Akuba Amihyia, who is in her 70s, I learned that salt production was once a vibrant economic activity in Appolonia sometime in the nineteenth century. Auntie Amihyia explained that her parents told stories of how their parents used to sell salt produced from the Atlantic Sea to distant

communities like Ahanta, Wassa, and Takoradi.[69] She dated this exchange to sometime before or during the regime of King Kaku Aka (c. 1835–1848).[70] Although Auntie Amihyia could not offer a precise date, her narrative is corroborated by J. Y. Ackah when he writes that salt, gold, and ivory were traded goods in seventeenth- through nineteenth-century Appolonia.[71] Analyzing oral testimonies and traditions in relation to textual sources significantly helped me reimagine and situate Nzulezo's past in existing Appolonian and Gold Coast historiographies.

During my time in Nzulezo, I remained attentive to the people's material culture such as the stilt houses, canoes, and drums, as well as their non-material culture like songs, proverbs, and clothes. Clothes have the advantage of evincing nuances, for instance, the meanings of (im)morality, in the communal life of the Nzulezo, and songs and proverbs can reveal the cultural sensibilities and philosophies of the people.[72] Moreover, the construction processes, as well as the architectural designs of the stilted buildings, offer insights into how the people measured wealth and socio-economic status, negotiated gender roles, and valued their environment. I draw on the material and non-material culture of Nzulezo people to shape the narrative of this dissertation.

The Chapters

This dissertation is chronologically and thematically organized into five chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 focus on the early years of the Nzulezo people from the pre-eighteenth century to the mid-1700s, examining the people's ancestral migrations to the Gold Coast. Chapter 3

[69] Auntie Akuba Amihyia in an interview with the author, August 6, 2021, in Beyin.
[70] Ibid.
[71] J. Y. Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," Appendix 2.
[72] I have learned this technique from E. O. Erim, "Songs as Sources of History," *Journal of Historical Studies*, 1 (1990), 36-44; Nwando Achebe, *Farmers, Traders, Warriors, and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900-1960* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005), 22; Nwando Achebe, "Nwando Achebe--Daughter, Wife, and Guest--A Researcher at the Crossroads," *Journal of Women's History* 14, no. 3 (2002), 11; Charles O. Aluede and Abu A. Braimah, "Edo Folk Songs as Sources of Historical Reconstruction," *Studies of Tribes and Tribals* 3, no. 2 (2005), 123–28.

concentrates on slavery and the Atlantic slave trade in Appolonia. It unpacks Appolonia's position in eighteenth and the early nineteenth-century Gold Coast, a story that gives historical context to why Nzulezo people chose to settle in Appolonia and not any other place on the Gold Coast. Overlapping with the preceding discussions, chapters 4 and 5 primarily explore the Nzulezo people's life in Appolonia and on the Amanzule River from the mid-1700s to the mid-1800s.

Chapters one and two trace the origin and migration history of Nzulezo people from the savannah belt of Western Africa (in present-day Mali) to the Gold Coast and examines why the people chose to settle within the Kingdom of Appolonia. Chapter one contends that Nzulezo the ancestors of Nzulezo migrated from an undetermined location in the ancient Mali Kingdom because political instability. Their search for refuge brought them to the Gold Coast and, particularly, Appolonia.[73] I contend that beyond the quest for security, two other factors shaped the people's choice to settle in Appolonia: (1) spirituality (i.e., the people's adherence to *evu*, their snail deity, believed to have directed them to Appolonia), and (2) the Afro-European commerce that flourished along the coast of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Gold Coast. The above factors may explain Nzulezo people's choice for Appolonia, but those factors did not necessarily grant them admission into the Appolonian Kingdom. Chapter two explores conditions in Appolonia, including the kingdom's open-border policy and *amonle* ritual, that made the itinerant Nzulezo settling relatively seamless.

One cannot discuss the eighteenth-century history of Nzulezo and Appolonia in isolation from broader historical events of that era, such as slavery and the Atlantic slave trade. Thus, chapter three repositions Nzulezo and Appolonia within rigorous dialogues on slavery and the

[73] Nana Ezoah and Joseph Ackah (elders of Nzulezo), in an interview with the author, January 17, 2020, in Nzulezo.

slave trade on the Gold Coast and West Africa. This approach leads to critical findings and conclusions. For instance, *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* (TSTD) demonstrates that between 1700 and 1830, the high point of the Atlantic slaving on the Gold Coast and West Africa, a total of 352 enslaved people was exported from Appolonia to the Americas.[74] This figure (352) is striking because it is very low compared to estimates of slave exportation from other slave-trading port towns on the Gold Coast like Elmina (which exported 85,636 enslaved people), Cape Coast (100,434 enslaved people), and Anomabo (168,348 enslaved people) within that period.[75] These data raise an important, yet overlooked, question: why did Appolonia export much fewer enslaved individuals in comparison to its neighbors? Drawing on oral histories and European archival records, I argue that although domestic slavery existed in Appolonia, the transatlantic slave trade was very minimal in the kingdom because Appolonia's political economy was not dependent on the production and exportation of enslaved people, as was the case elsewhere on the Gold Coast and in West Africa. Additionally, socio-cultural customs such as the *amonle* ritual in Appolonia helped mitigate the slave trade.

Chapter four explores the Nzulezo life on the Amanzule River, examining how the people perceived and used water. Bodies of water served different functions in Appolonia at different historical moments—for instance, during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Appolonian rivers such as the Ankobra served as an attraction to both local Gold Coasters and Europeans.[76] Furthermore, throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Nzulezo and Appolonian people conceptualized the Rivers Tano, Ankobra, Amanzule, and the Atlantic Ocean

[74] See detailed data on Slavevoyages.org [https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database#tables].
[75] Ibid
[76] Albert Van Dantzig, "The Ankobra Gold Interest," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 14, no. 2 (1973): 169; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 42.

as gods and goddesses and sacred spaces for spiritual activities.[77] Thus, for the Nzulezo, their settling on the Amanzule River was synonymous to inhabiting a space of spiritual power, security, and tranquility: for they lived "in the belly of deities." This notion encouraged the Nzulezo forebears to remain on the Amanzule River, contributing to the community's social evolution.

Chapter five examines how the pre-colonial Nzulezo people survived on the Amanzule River from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. Drawing on historian Ray Kea's seminal research on social evolution of the pre-colonial Gold Coast society, I contend that the pre-colonial Nzulezo population sustained itself through three main social reproduction systems: their settlement order, economic order, and socio-political order. These systems lend historical expression to how the pre-colonial Nzulezo progenitors understood and controlled the Amanzule waterscape, which possessed "wild" animals like crocodiles and pythons. I argue that the Nzulezo ancestors "inserted" themselves as the dominant organism within the reptilian, amphibian, and mammalian Amanzule ecology, which allowed them to not only exploit the water space for their survival but also cultivate "sustainable" socio-political and economic norms that contributed to the community's evolution over time.

The concluding chapter ties together the entire discussion, reminding readers about the pre-colonial Nzulezo people's resilience, survival, and adaptation to physically challenging environments like the Amanzule waterscape. It also emphasizes Nzulezo's and Appolonia's critical position in history by demonstrating some of the theoretical contributions of this research to the historiography of the Gold Coast and West Africa.

[77] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 18. Also see Emmanuel Akyeampong, *Drink, Power, and Cultural Change in Ghana*, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996, 4-6.

CHAPTER ONE:

ɔbra yɛ ɔkwantuo (Life Is a Journey): Nzulezo Origin and Migration History

The pre-colonial history of the people of Nzulezo is not documented in written archival sources. It is mainly articulated through oral traditions. The people's past is also embedded in material and non-material culture, including stilt houses, handmade canoe artifacts, customary practices, and folktales that still exist in the community. For instance, on April 16 of every year, Nzulezo people annually celebrate their arrival at the Amanzule River through ritual performances, dance, and the offering of libation to the Amanzule river god.[78] While this and other Nzulezo cultural performances reveal much about the people's past, the people's recollection of their pre-colonial ancestry and migrations to the Atlantic coast remains vague and conflictual. That notwithstanding, oral traditions serve as the primary historical source for reconstructing the Nzulezo past.

By blending oral histories with existing anthropological and historical scholarship on human migration in pre-eighteenth-century West Africa, this chapter discusses the origin and migration history of the Nzulezo community with a particular focus on the movements of people to and from the Gold Coast and the Mande region of the West Africa. It contends that the Nzulezo ancestors possibly originated from an indeterminate place in the ancient Mali Empire.[79] They might have been one of the itinerant Bambara or Mandinka people, notably the Dyula or

[78] Joshua Ezoa (Nzulezo linguist) in an interview with the author, March 2020, in Nzulezo. In April 2021, I observed the customary performance marking the Nzulezo people's pre-colonial arrival at the Amanzule River. During this occasion, several community elders and spiritual leaders (priests/esses) from adjoining towns, including Beyin and Ngelekazo, as well as distant kinfolks from the Aby Lagoon area in present-day southeastern Ivory Coast, joined in the celebration. Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang briefly discusses this custom in *Where There Is No Silence: Articulations of Resistance to Enslavement* (Accra, Ghana: Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2008), 44.

[79] Nana Takrika VII (chief of Nzulezo), Joshua Ezoa, Agya Emuah (a Nzulezo elder), John Arthur (the community-appointed Nzulezo oral historian), Safohyenle Kwame (Nzulezo elder), and Akwasi Eba (a Nzulezo resident) all indicate that their ancestors originally migrated from the Old Mali Empire. My multiple conversations with these research collaborators happened during the summers of 2017, 2018, and 2022 at Nzulezo and Ahumasuazo, a nearby town.

Wangara, who came to the Gold Coast to seek refuge from political instability or for religious and trade purposes.[80] Although Nzulezo oral traditions privilege the quest for security and spirituality as the primary reasons for their ancestral migrations to the West African coast, I espouse that trade (mainly the pre-colonial gold trade in the Gold Coast interior and later the Afro-European commerce on the Gold Coast) might have attracted the Nzulezo ancestors to the Gold Coast.

Nzulezo Identity, Origin, & Migrations

The identity of the Nzulezo people has been debated by scholars of Appolonia, the pre-colonial Gold Coast kingdom where the people settled. Drawing on historical linguistics, linguist J. A. Essuah and historian Pierluigi Valsecchi, for instance, have traced one of the pre-colonial languages of the Nzulezo people (i.e., the Ewuture or Ehotile language) to the Ehotile ethnic group, who live in the Aby Lagoon region in what is today southeastern Ivory Coast.[81] Based on their finding, Essuah and Valsecchi argue that the Nzulezo ancestors originally migrated from the Aby Lagoon region to Appolonia in southwestern Gold Coast.[82] While Nzulezo oral tradition confirms Ehotile as one of their pre-colonial languages—suggesting some kind of cultural ties to the larger Ehotile group in Ivory Coast—Nzulezo people do not trace their ancestral homeland to southeastern Ivory Coast.[83] Instead, they suggest that their forebears originated from an indeterminate place in the Old Mali Kingdom and journeyed southward to the Gold Coast with

[80] Ibid.
[81] J. A. Essuah, *Mekakye Bie*, vol. I–III (Cape Coast, Ghana: Catholic Mission Press, 1958), 116-116; Pierluigi Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa: Appolonia from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 45, 47-51.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Nana Takrika VII, Joshua Ezoa, Agya Emuah, John Arthur, Safohyenle Kwame, and Akwasi Eba in multiple interviews with the author, June to July 2018 at Nzulezo. Also see Opoku-Agyemang, *Where There Is No Silence*, 46.

other kin groups, who chose to settle in present-day Ivory Coast and Guinea.[84] These Ivory Coast settlers might be the Ehotile group to which Valsecchi and Essuah trace Nzulezo ancestry.

Nzulezo Oral Traditions Deconstructed

Contrary to Essuah's and Valseechi's argument, Nzulezo people relate that their ancestors were once subjects of the ancient Mali Empire, which existed in Western Sahara from the thirteenth century to the second half of the seventeenth century.[85] Their forebears were hunters, carvers, and farmers who fled the Mali Empire during its declining years for two main reasons: to search for refuge and a better livelihood elsewhere.[86] John Arthur, Nzulezo's oral historian, offers insight into Nzulezo ancestors' life in Mali. Appointed by the Nzulezo community, Arthur is schooled in the history, traditions, and customary practices of Nzulezo. Like Nzulezo oral historians before him, including, Tufuhene Ata and Tufuhene Mogan, John Arthur is tasked with preserving and telling the history of his people. Thus, in many ways, he is a walking archive.[87] Discussing aspects of the Nzulezo ancestor's life in the Old Mali Kingdom, Arthur states:

You asked about the life of our forebears in Mali. That aspect of our history is

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[84] John Arthur (Nzulezo oral historian), Joshua Ezoah (Nzulezo linguist), Maame Nda Aluah, Safohyenle Kwame (of Ahumasuazo), and Agya Emuah (Nzulezo elder) in multiple interviews with the author, June – July 2018 in Nzulezo and Ahumasuazo.

[85] Michael Gomez, *African Dominion: A New History of Empire in Early and Medieval West Africa* (Princeton Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019), 3, 6. Kathryn L. Green, "'Mande Kaba,' the Capital of Mali: A Recent Invention?," *History in Africa* 18 (1991): 128–29; M. Ly-Tall, "The Decline of the Mali Empire," in *General History of Africa; IV: Africa from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century*, ed. DjiBril Tamsir Niane (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1984), 182-184.

[86] Nana Takrika VII (chief of Nzulezo), John Arthur, and Joshua Ezoah in conversations with the author, June – July 2018, in Nzulezo. Also see Opoku-Agyemang, *Where There Is No Silence*, 41-42.

[87] My use of "walking archive" comes from Dele Layiwola's terminology, "living libraries," which depicts old African men and women as living repositories of history. See Dele Layiwola, *A Handbook of Methodologies of African Studies* (Pittsburgh, PA: Dorrance Publishing, 2010), ix.
Tufuhene Mogan and Tufuhene Ata once served as the official oral historians of the Nzulezo community. Historian Pierluigi Valsecchi notes that he garnered oral historical data from Tufuhene Ata in 1998 for his 2011 monograph, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*. Collecting data for his undergraduate thesis filed in 2000, Samuel Kofi Ackah, a history major from the History Department at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, interviewed Tufuhene Mogan.

> almost lost in antiquity. What we know is that our ancestors came from Mali, the place we call *anwea anwea* [*anwea* is a Twi word for sand. In this context, *anwea anwea* refers to the savannah or Sahel terrain of the Middle Niger]. We do not know precisely which part of Mali they lived: maybe Timbuktu or some place in Mali. Our ancestors were farmers and hunters. They also were wood carvers.[88]

Linguist Naana Opoku-Agyemang affirms John Arthur's supposition in her transcription of oral traditions she collected from Nzulezo in 2008.[89]

While the above tradition traces Nzulezo's ancestry to the Mali Empire and offers insight into the people's reasons for fleeing, it leaves several critical questions about their past unclarified. For instance, from which locality in the Old Mali Kingdom did the Nzulezo ancestors originate, and to what ethnicity did they belong? And why did the Nzulezo ancestors choose to emigrate to the Gold Coast and not any other place in Western Africa? These questions largely remain unaddressed because of a dearth in historical sources. However, situating available Nzulezo oral traditions in existing historiographies of human movements in pre-eighteenth-century West Africa allows us to historicize the Nzulezo ancestral migrations to the Gold Coast.

We know that the Nzulezo ancestral migration was linked to political instability in the Niger Bend and, specifically, to the collapse of the Mali Empire.[90] Although there is no consensus on the precise date for the fall of the Mali Empire, scholars like Michael Gomez, D. T. Niane, M. Ly-Tall, and Kathryn Green, have established that the fall of Mali began in the

[88] John Arthur in an interview with the author, June 2018, at Nzulezo.
[89] Opoku-Agyemang, *Where There Is No Silence*, 41.
[90] John Arthur (Nzulezo oral historian), Joshua Ezoah (Nzulezo linguist), Maame Nda Aluah, Safohyenle Kwame (of Ahumasuazo), and Agya Emuah (Nzulezo elder) in multiple interviews with the author, June – July 2018 in Nzulezo and Ahumasuazo.

fifteenth century and culminated in the 1670s.[91] By the early fifteenth century, competing claims to the Malian throne pitched royal families against one another, resulting in civil discord, secession of major towns like Gao, and the collapse of political capitals like Diériba and Niani.[92] Meanwhile, the kingdom experienced significant declines in commerce due to increasing attacks by the Tuareg and "Berber" on the Saharan trade routes leading to North Africa.[93] The Portuguese growing presence on the Senegambian coast in the fifteenth century also encouraged the creation of alternative markets on the West African coast, all of which helped weaken Mali's economic position in the subregion.[94] These events were followed by King Suni Ali's 1468 invasions of Mali, the Fulani 1481-1514 conquests of Mali's western province, the 1599 attack on Djenne by Songhai armies, and the sporadic attacks from Bambara and Fulbe warriors in the seventeenth century.[95] These attacks led to the steady erosion of Mali's political and economic standing in seventeenth-century West Africa.[96] What was left of the kingdom would later be absorbed by the Moroccan Empire in the 1670s.[97]

If the Nzulezo ancestral migration occurred during the declining years of the Mali Empire, then the Nzulezo ancestors might have fled Mali sometime between the fifteenth century

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[91] Gomez, *African Dominion*, 6. Ly-Tall, "The Decline of the Mali Empire," 182-184; DjiBril Tamsir Niane, "Mali and the Second Mandingo Expansion," in *General History of Africa; IV: Africa from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century*, ed. DjiBril Tamsir Niane (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1984), 117–71; Green, "'Mande Kaba,' the Capital of Mali," 128.

[92] Jan Jansen, "The Representation of Status in Mande: Did the Mali Empire Still Exist in the Nineteenth Century?," *History in Africa* 23 (1996): 87–109; Ly-Tall, "The Decline of the Mali Empire," 173-74; Mark Cartwright, "Mali Empire," in *World History Encyclopedia*, 2019, https://www.worldhistory.org/Mali_Empire/.

[93] Ly-Tall, "The Decline of the Mali Empire," 173-74; Mark Cartwright, "Mali Empire," in *World History Encyclopedia*, 2019, https://www.worldhistory.org/Mali_Empire/.

[94] Gomez, *African Dominion*, 112, 151-154; Ly-Tall, "The Decline of the Mali Empire," 182-183; 185.

[95] Michael Gomez, *African Dominion*, 331; Maurice Delafosse, *Haut-Sénégal Niger. Vol. II. L'Histoire* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1912b), 283; Ly-Tall, "The Decline of the Mali Empire," 173-74; Green, "'Mande Kaba,' the Capital of Mali," 128-130; Cartwright, "Mali Empire;" Nehemia Levtzion, *Ancient Ghana and Mali* (London, UK: Methuen, 1973), 81; George T. Stride and Caroline Ifeka, *Peoples and Empires of West Africa; West Africa in History, 1000-1800* (London: Holmes & Meier Pub, 1971), 273-75; David C. Conrad, *Empires of Medieval West Africa: Ghana, Mali, and Songhay* (New York, NY: Infobase Publishing, 2009), 33-48; John O. Hunwick, "The Mid-Fourteenth Century Capital of Mali," *The Journal of African History* 14, no. 2 (1973): 195–206.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Green, "'Mande Kaba,' the Capital of Mali," 128; Cartwright, "Mali Empire."

and the 1670s. This postulation is not farfetched because, during this period, the Mandinka, Bambara, and Mossi departed from the Middle Niger and the Niger Bend to different parts of West Africa.[98] These groups relocated for reasons related to trade, religion (Islam), political conflicts, and unfavorable environmental conditions.[99] For instance, environmentalist scholars like Sharon Nicholson and George Brooks demonstrate how the prolonged desiccation and intermittent rainfalls in Western Africa during the fifteenth through the eighteenth century forced Mandinka traders and warriors to move south and west from the Niger Bend to the southerly woodland and tropical rainforest zones of West Africa.[100] Brooks maintains that the emigrating Mandinka people constructed "landlord-stranger reciprocity" agreements with the West Atlantic Kruan-, and Gur-speaking people living in the Cape Mount and Senegambian regions.[101] These agreements proved untenable because the newcomers later conquered and expropriated the lands of the original settlers.[102]

The seventeenth century also witnessed the progressive emigration of the Dyula, Ligby, Mossi, and Hwela peoples from the West African savannah region to the Gold Coast interior, occupying the woodland regions of Wa, Bouna, and Bighu, as well as the forest zones of

[98] Ly-Tall, "The Decline of the Mali Empire," 186; Niane, "Mali and the Second Mandingo Expansion," 170-171.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Sharon E. Nicholson, "The Methodology of Historical Climate Reconstruction and Its Application to Africa," *The Journal of African History* 20, no. 1 (January 1979), 31–49; Nicholson; George E. Brooks, "A Provisional Historical Schema for Western Africa Based on Seven Climate Periods (ca. 9000 B.C. to the 19th Century) (Un Schéma Provisoire de l'histoire de l'Afrique Occidentale, Fondé Sur Sept Périodes Climatiques (de ca. 9000 Av. J.-C. Au XIXe Siècle))," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 26, no. 101/102 (1986), 43–62; George Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers: Ecology, Society, and Trade in Western Africa, 1000-1630* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 4. For more readings on this subject, see James Webb, Jr., *Desert Frontier: Ecological and Economic Change Along the Western Sahel, 1600-1850* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995); James C. McCann, "Climate and Causation in African History," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 32, no. 2/3 (1999): 261–79; Roderick J. McIntosh, "Two Thousand Years of Niche Specialization and Ecological Resilience in the Middle Niger," *Mande Studies* 6 (2004): 59–75; Sharon E. Nicholson, "Climate of the Sahel and West Africa," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Climate Science*, September 26, 2018.
[101] Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers*, 49-120 (Chapters 3-6).
[102] Ibid.

Takyiman, Old Wenkyi, and Mansu.[103] Islamic proselytization and the trade in gold, kola nut, and enslaved people served as the primary motivations for such migrations.[104] However, over time, the quest to conquer the original settlers and create new polities became an appealing factor, leading to the Dyula-, Hwela-, and Mossi-warrior groups founding new states like Gonja in the Gold Coast interior.[105] The Nzulezo ancestral migration to the Gold Coast might have coincided with the organized dispersal of the Mande, Mossi, and other Western Sudanic groups to the Gold Coast, possibly in the second half of the seventeenth century.

The First Known Migration: From the Middle Niger to the Gold Coast Interior

As earlier noted, the quest for security from political conflicts and the need for a better livelihood incentivized the Nzulezo forebears to flee their supposed ancestral home in the Middle Niger. However, according to Nzulezo traditions, the people's decision to come to the Gold Coast, was predominantly determined by evu, the Nzulezo snail deity.[106] Nzulezo oral tradition explains that the Nzulezo forebears migrated in large groups of forty-seven families, with each family headed by a male leader.[107] The families were led by evu, which communicated through

[103] Ivor Wilks, "Wangara, Akan and Portuguese in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries. 1. The Matter of Bitu," *The Journal of African History* 23, no. 3 (1982): 333–49; Jack Goody, *The Ethnography of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, West of the White Volta* (London: UK: Colonial Office, 1954), 42-45; Kwaku Effah-Gyamfi, *Bono Manso: An Archaeological Investigation into Early Akan Urbanism* (Calgary, Canada: The University of Calgary Press, 1985), 209-210; Colin Flight, "The Chronology of the Kings and Queenmothers of Bono-Manso: A Revaluation of the Evidence," *The Journal of African History* 11, no. 2 (1970): 259–68; Dennis M. Warren, "The Use and Misuse of Ethnohistorical Data in the Reconstruction of Techiman-Bono (Ghana) History," *Ethnohistory* 23, no. 4 (1976): 365–85; Kwasi Konadu, *The Akan People: A Documentary History* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2016), 175-78; Ivor Wilks, Nehemia Levtzion, and Bruce M. Haight, *Chronicles from Gonja: A Tradition of West African Muslim Historiography* (Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 2-17.

[104] Wilks, Levtzion, and Haight, *Chronicles from Gonja*, 4-7; Goody, *The Ethnography of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, West of the White Volta*, 42-43; Jack Goody, "A Note on the Penetration of Islam into the West of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast," *Transactions of the Gold Coast & Togoland Historical Society* 1, no. 2 (1953): 45–46; Niane, "Mali and the Second Mandingo Expansion," 171.

[105] Goody, *The Ethnography of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, West of the White Volta*, 44-46; Wilks, Levtzion, and Haight, *Chronicles from Gonja*, 18-28.

[106] John Arthur and Safohyenli Kwame (Nzulezo elder) in interviews with the author, July 2018, August 2022, in Nzulezo and Ahumasuazo.

[107] Nana Takrika VII (chief of Nzulezo), John Arthur, and Joshua Ezoa in conversations with the author, June – July 2018, in Nzulezo. Also see Opoku-Agyemang, *Where There Is No Silence*, 41-42.

seers who served as spiritual leaders. In the people's socio-political organization, evu occupied the highest office as the spiritual head whose directives everyone adhered to. Its *snail* identity embodied the qualities of patience, peacefulness, meekness, and sluggishness. Evu is portrayed as the all-knowing and omnipotent deity, who foresaw and protected the people from looming dangers. It primarily determined the people's migratory routes and temporary stays.[108] John Arthur, the Nzulezo oral historian, explains evu's critical role in their ancestral migration as follows.

> When and wherever the snail went, our ancestors followed. When it moved, it meant that danger was eminent; an enemy was in pursuit of killing our ancestors. So, the seers would quickly inform the family leaders, who would also mobilize the entire group and continue to trek south. The snail could also stay at a particular location for a long time, even for years. Our ancestors lived in different locations and among different people for many years. If you asked about how and why our ancestors came by this direction (i.e., the Gold Coast), that is your answer—*evu na ɔde wɔn baa ha* (evu directed them here).[109]

The forty-seven family leaders, whose socio-political office ranked second to evu's, also significantly shaped the people's migratory experiences. They enforced evu's directives, maintained order within the migrating community, and protected the

[108] Ibid.

[109] John Arthur in an interview with the author, June 2017 in Nzulezo—(an excerpt of John's interview transcript). Other Nzulezo residents, including Agya Kulu (a Nzulezo elder), Safohyenle Kwame, and Safohyenle Agya Pra (an elder from the Beyin community) told similar stories in August 2022. Agya Kulu is an 86-year-old male elder of the Nzulezo community. Born and raised in Nzulezo, Kulu serves on the Nzulezo royal council, an advisory body to the Nzulezo chief, Nana Takrika VII. Kulu also sits on the royal advisory council of the Western Nzema paramountcy, the largest chieftain unit that controls about twenty-five towns, including Beyin, Ngelekazo, and Nzulezo. In this position, Agya Kulu advises the paramount chief of Western Nzema, Awulae Annor Adjaye II. Like Kulu, Safohyenle (a title for a war leader) Agya Pra and Kwame occupy esteemed royal offices in Nzulezo and Beyin, the capital of the West Nzema paramountcy. Kwame is 56 years old, and Agya Pra is in his late sixties. These community leaders are well-versed in the history and customs of Nzulezo and the broader Appolonian region.

community members from enemy attacks.[110] Although evu gave instructions on when and where the people could emigrate, these leaders primarily determined the "how" of such movements. The seers ranked next to the family leaders. They possessed idiosyncratic capabilities that allowed them to interact with and relay evu's directives to the family leaders and members.[111] The family members were at the bottom of the social strata. They adhered to evu's dictates and collaborated with their family and spiritual leaders to *make* the Nzulezo ancestral community.[112]

Comprehensive histories of the Nzulezo ancestral community are lost in antiquity. However, critically analyzing the above oral traditions offer rich insight into the people's past. For instance, the fact that forty-seven different family leaders led the Nzulezo forebears suggests that during their migrations, the people practiced a non-centralized system of government like that of the pre-colonial Igbo, Balanta, Dagaaba, and Tallensi societies in West Africa.[113] A journey from the Middle Niger to the Gold Coast, which historian Ivor Wilks describes as lasting over 50 days of trekking, could also expose the Nzulezo migrants to diverse encounters with other human groups: Opoku-Agyemang represents one of such encounters as an enemy attack on the Nzulezo migrants.[114] Recounting how the present-day Nzulezo residents remember their past, Opoku-Agyemang writes:

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[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid.
[113] For studies on non-centralized societies in West Africa, especially on the Ballanta, Tallensi, Dagaaba, and Igbo, see A. E. Afigbo, *The Igbo and Their Neighbours: Inter-Group Relations in Southeastern Nigeria to 1953* (Ibadan, Nigeria: University Press, 1987); Elizabeth A. Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People* (London, UK: Macmillan, 1976); Okonkwo C. Eze, Paul U. Omeje, and Uchenna G. Chinweuba, "The Igbo: 'A Stateless Society,'" *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences MCSER Publishing, Rome-Italy* 5, no. 27 (2014): 1315–21; Kojo Yelpaala, "Western Anthropological Concepts in Stateless Societies: A Retrospective and Introspective Look at the Dagaaba," *Dialectical Anthropology* 17, no. 4 (1992): 431–71; Jack Goody, "The Political Systems of the Tallensi and Their Neighbours 1888–1915," *Cambridge Anthropology* 14, no. 2 (1990): 1–25; Walter Hawthorne, *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformations along the Guinea-Bissau Coast,1400-1900* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003).
[114] See Wilks, "Wangara, Akan and Portuguese," 339.

> Of course, we [Nzulezo ancestors] tried to fight and we did fight, not with guns as people do now. As a fighter you had to be strong, and study people closely. But, you see, it was not just part of our thinking to relish in laying humans to waste. And, if you feel that your strength has become weak and the fight will turn you into something you don't wish for, then you leave in order to save your life. Maybe this does not make sense to you, but that was the decision to stop fighting and just move on.[115]

Opoku-Agyemang depicts the Nzulezo ancestors as capable of defending themselves against enemy groups—as an agentive and pragmatic itinerant people who fought for survival and brawled their way to the Gold Coast. However, Opoku-Agyemang fails to offer historical nuances of the alleged battles, the enemy groups involved, and the period and geographical locations where these battles occurred. These limitations, coupled with the dearth of alternative sources to clarify Opoku-Agyemang's claim, cast the above tradition as unconvincing, if not historically untrue. Although unconvincing, historians Michael Gomez, Kathryn Green, and M. Ly-Tall have demonstrated that the fall of the Mali Empire exacerbated warfare in the Middle Niger, especially during the seventeenth century.[116] If the Nzulezo ancestors fled the Old Mali Empire sometime between the fifteenth century and the 1670s, it is conceivable that they could have encountered warring parties at anytime and anywhere in Western Africa, particularly the Djenne-Ségou-Bamako area—albeit, there are no empirical evidence that suggests so. The lack of sources, therefore, makes it challenging to historicize the

[115] Opoku-Agyemang, *Where There Is No Silence*, 42.
[116] Gomez, *African Dominion*, 71-72; Green, "'Mande Kaba,' the Capital of Mali," 131; Ly-Tall, "The Decline of the Mali Empire," 183.

Nzulezo people's migratory experience from the Mali Empire to the Gold Coast. Nonetheless, Nzulezo traditions about their forbears' temporary stay in the Gold Coast Kingdom of Bono compensate for the lost histories.

Figure 3: Nzulezo People's Journey to the Bono Kingdom

Source: map designed by the author using technological tools from Mapbox Studio.

The Nzulezo People in the Gold Coast Interior

In addition to the Mali Empire, the Nzulezo people identify Takyiman as a location where their ancestors sojourned.[117] Takyiman, located in the Gold Coast interior, is a culturally significant town in pre-colonial Gold Coast historiography because it served as an ancestral

[117] Ibid, Nana Takrika VII, John Arthur, Safohyenle Agya Pra, and Safohenle Kwame (a Nzulezo elder) in multiple interviews with the author, June-July 2017 and 2018, in Nzulezo, Beyin, and Ahumasuazo.

homeland and a sojourning location to several Gold Coast nations, including the Akwamu and Fante.[118] The founders of Takyiman were Twi-speakers who belonged to the Bono (Bron) Kingdom, the earliest centralized Akan state in the Gold Coast hinterland.[119] Represented variously in Gold Coast historiographies as Takyiman-Bono and Bono-Mansu, the Bono Kingdom existed in the west-central area of the Gold Coast interior, in present-day Brong-Ahafo Region of Ghana.[120] The kingdom's founding date is not certain; however, scholars like Ivor Wilks and Colin Flight have suggested the late fifteenth century as its origin.[121]

Asaman is considered the founder and first *omanhene* (paramount chief or king) of Bono-Mansu.[122] Bono oral tradition explains that Asaman led his people from a subterranean cavern called *Amowi* to their present location.[123] Encountering no residents in this location, the Bono considered themselves the first settlers and hence adopted the name, *abono woo*, which translates to "first-born." Over time, *abono woo* became Bono.[124] The Bono territory existed at the ecotone of the southerly Akan Forest region and the northerly woodland and savannah zones, where the Old Banda Kingdom existed—see Figure 3 above.[125]

Throughout the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, the Bono-Banda region received

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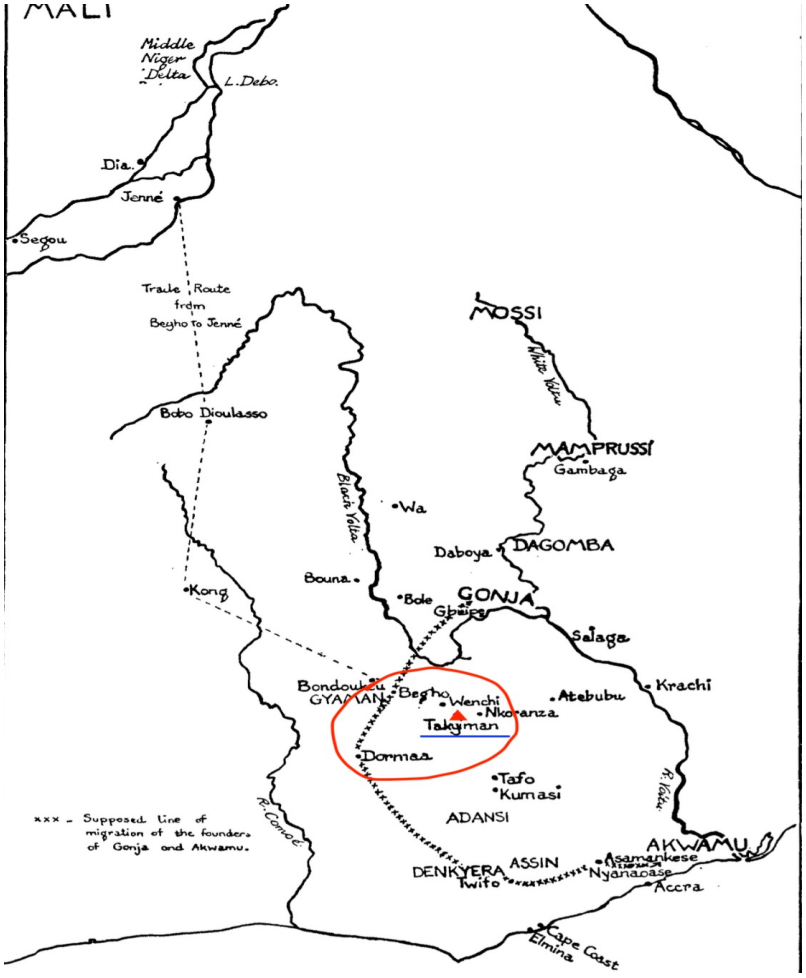
[118] A. Adu Boahen, "The Origins of the Akan," *Ghana Notes and Queries.*, no. 9 (1966): 3–10; D Tait, "Akan Traditions of Origins," *Man*, no. 10 (1953); R. A. Mauny, "The Question of Ghana," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 24, no. 3 (1954): 200–213; Jack Goody, "Ethnohistory and the Akan of Ghana," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 29, no. 1 (1959): 67–81; Warren, "The Use and Misuse of Ethnohistorical Data in the Reconstruction of Techiman-Bono (Ghana) History," 365-67; Effah-Gyamfi, *Bono Manso: An Archaeological Investigation into Early Akan Urbanism*, 21.
[119] Warren, "The Use and Misuse of Ethnohistorical Data in the Reconstruction of Techiman-Bono (Ghana) History," 366.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Flight, "The Chronology of the Kings and Queenmothers of Bono-Manso," 266-268; Wilks, "Wangara, Akan and Portuguese," 357.
[122] Warren, "The Use and Misuse of Ethnohistorical Data in the Reconstruction of Techiman-Bono (Ghana) History," 366.
[123] Ibid; Effah-Gyamfi, *Bono Manso: An Archaeological Investigation into Early Akan Urbanism*, 13.
[124] Warren, "The Use and Misuse of Ethnohistorical Data in the Reconstruction of Techiman-Bono (Ghana) History," 366.
[125] Warren, "The Use and Misuse of Ethnohistorical Data in the Reconstruction of Techiman-Bono (Ghana) History," 366.

several West African migrant groups, including the Dyula, Numu, Ligby, Dompo, and Mossi, primarily because of its position in the Akan-Mande commercial network.[126] The Akan forest lands were heavily auriferous and supported the cultivation of kola nut.[127] The need for gold, kola nut, salt, and enslaved people for the trans-Saharan market attracted several West African groups, notably the Dyula and Mossi, to the Bono and Banda regions.[128] The Banda town of Bighu, the then most populous and cosmopolitan territory in the Gold Coast hinterland, functioned as the entrepôt responsible for the flows of gold, kola nut, salt, and several other merchandise between the markets on the Gold Coast and those of the Niger Bend and beyond.[129] By the second half of the seventeenth century, Bighu and the broader Bono-Banda region had transformed into a major and vibrant cosmopolitan territory peopled with Muslims and non-Muslims, warrior groups, and traders from different ethnicities, including the Akan, Mandinka, Bambara, Mossi, and Fulani.[130]

[126] Goody, *The Ethnography of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, West of the White Volta*, 40-45; Warren, "The Use and Misuse of Ethnohistorical Data in the Reconstruction of Techiman-Bono (Ghana) History," 376-78.
[127] Ivor Wilks, *Forests of Gold: Essays on the Akan and the Kingdom of Asante*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993), 1-28; Ivor Wilks, "Land, Labour, Capital and the Forest Kingdom of Asante: A Model of Early Change," in *The Evolution of Social Systems*, ed. J. Friedman and M. J. Rowlands (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978), 487–534; Merrick Posnansky, "Begho: Life and Times," *Journal of West African History* Vol 1, no. No. 2 (2015): 95–118; T. C. McCaskie, "Accumulation, Wealth and Belief in Asante History. I. To the Close of the Nineteenth Century," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 53, no. 1 (1983): 23–79.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Bighu's population was estimated to be not less than 10,000 inhabitants from different parts of West Africa. Its renown as a fortified and commercial town with both Muslim and non-Muslims residents was known to several West African travelers. For readings on Bighu, see Posnansky, "Begho: Life and Times," 72; Ray A. Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Polities in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 34. Wilks, *Forests of Gold*, 1-28; Wilks, "Wangara, Akan and Portuguese"; Ivor Wilks, "The Northern Factor in Ashanti History: Begho and the Mande," *Journal of African History* 2, no. 1 (1961): 25–34; Goody, "Ethnohistory and the Akan of Ghana."
[130] Ibid.

Figure 4: Map Showing Takyiman and Other Towns in the Bono-Banda Region



Source: map is adapted from Historian Ivor Wilks' "The Northern Factor in Asante History: Begho and the Mande" p. 27.

The Nzulezo ancestral migration to Takyiman in the Bono Kingdom might have coincided with the seventeenth-century mass movements of West African peoples to the Greater Bono-Banda region. Nzulezo tradition stipulates,

> A major stop was Takyiman, where we (the Nzulezo ancestors) stopped for such a very, very long time. We lived in Takyiman with the Akans for so long, watched those born there grow (to) get married, have children and even die… [sic] There

was enough ordinaries in life for us to forget about the past troubles.[131]

If the Nzulezo ancestors forgot about their past troubles while living in Takyiman, then Takyiman-Bono must have offered them the "peace" and the "better livelihood" they so desired. Imaginably, living in Takyiman by the second half of the seventeenth century would have afforded the Nzulezo forebears the opportunity to participate in the socio-cultural, economic, and political life of the Bono people. Little wonder the Nzulezo sojourners intermarried among other local people, notably the Akan (Bono) people, and witnessed the birth and death of new generations of Nzulezo people, as stipulated above. The (alleged) emergence of new Nzulezo generations in Takyiman suggests that the Nzulezo ancestors possibly lived in Takyiman-Bono for a long time, at least three decades, if not more—assuming one generation of a lifetime is equivalent to three decades. These years would have afforded the Nzulezo progenitors adequate time to develop a trade or be part of an existing one, perhaps the trade in gold, kola nut, or enslaved people.

Moreover, considering that the distance between Takyiman and the Muslim-dominated town of Bighu in the Banda Kingdom was approximately 31 kilometers (19.2 miles), it is likely that the Nzulezo ancestors encountered Islam and interacted, if not traded with, the Muslim Dyula in the region. Perhaps, the Nzulezo ancestors were one of these Dyula groups who emigrated from the Middle Niger to the Gold Coast to trade and seek refuge—although there is no evidence of cultural and linguistic change throughout the Nzulezo people's time in Takyiman, suggesting historical connections between them and the Dyula.

[131] Opoku-Agyemang, *Where There Is No Silence*, 42. Oral histories collected in the Nzulezo village and neighboring towns affirm Opoku-Agyemang's claim. Maame Nda Aluah (from Nzulezo), Maame Amihyia Adwo (from Beyin), John Arthur, Joshua Ezoah, Safohyenle Agya Prah, Safohyenle Kwame in multiple interviews with the author, July 2018 and 2021, August 2022, in Nzulezo, Beyin, Ahumasuazo.

Second Migration: From Takyiman to the Gold Coast

From Takyiman, the Nzulezo ancestors came to the Gold Coast town of Mankessim at an unknown time.[132] Two main factors help explain the Nzulezo migration to Mankessim—(1) political conflicts in the Bono-Banga region, particularly the 1722/23 Asante conquests of the Bono and Banda Kingdoms, and (2) the booming European (or Atlantic) commerce on the Gold Coast also served as an attraction.

The Asante Conquest of Bono and Banda, 1722-1723

In 1722 through 1723, the Asante Kingdom invaded and destroyed the Bono and Banda Kingdoms.[133] This military conquest followed Asante's war of independence from the Denkyira Kingdom in 1700/01 and constituted part of Asante's broader hegemonic scheme of colonizing the societies on the Gold Coast and its interior.[134] From 1659 to 1699, Denkyira was undoubtedly the most powerful Akan state in the western Gold Coast hinterland.[135] It had subdued almost all the westerly inland Akan societies, including Adanse, Akani, Aowin, Wassa, Twifo, Sehwi, and Asante, reducing them to vassal status.[136] However, from 1700 to 1701, "Asante and Denkyira resumed fighting, and in November 1701, news reached the coast that Asante had defeated Denkyira."[137] Asante's victory under the rulership of Nana Osei Tutu, the first Asantehene who reigned from 1701 to 1717, changed Asante's position from a former Denkyira vassal to the most

[132] John Arthur, Nana Takrika VII, Agya Emuah, Joshua Ezoa, and Safohyenle Kwame in separate interviews with the author, June-July 2017, July 2018, and August 2022, at Nzulezo and Ahumasuazo. Opoku-Agyemang also discusses this in *Where There Is No Silence*, 42.
[133] John K. Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours, 1700-1807* (London: UK: Longman, 1971), 40.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Kwame Yeboah Daaku, *Denkyira* (Organization of African Unity, Centre for Linguistic and Historical Studies by Oral Tradition, 1970), 5; J. Gordon, "Some Oral Traditions of Denkyira," *Transactions of the Gold Coast & Togoland Historical Society* 1, no. 3 (1953): 27–33; T. C. McCaskie, "Denkyira in the Making of Asante c. 1660-1720," *The Journal of African History* 48, no. 1 (2007): 1–25; Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours, 1700-1807*, 40.
[136] Daaku, *Denkyira*, 5-6; Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours, 1700-1807*, 39-40.
[137] Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours*, 39-40.

powerful westerly inland Akan state of the early eighteenth century.[138] Through diplomacy, former Denkyira vassals (i.e., Akani, Aowin, Wassa) came under Asante's control and authority.[139]

Then, after a decade under Asante's rule, some vassal states, notably Aowin, Sefwi, and Wassa, began to challenge Asante's authority by refusing to pay annual tributes and attacking territories under Asante's regime.[140] For instance, during the Asante-Akyem War of 1721, Chief Ebirim Moro of Sehwi invaded Kumasi, the capital of the Asante Kingdom, while Asantehene Opoku Ware was actively fighting his enemies in Akyem.[141] Historian J. K. Fynn explains that Ebirim Moro routed Kumasi's auxiliary army and "killed Asantehemaa (Asante queen mother) Nyarko and all but two members of the Asante royal family who were captured and sent to Sehwi as prisoners."[142]

Learning of Ebirim Moro's invasion of his capital, Asantehene Opoku Ware quickly left Akyem for Kumasi and dispatched an Asante army led by General Amankwa Tia to pursue the enemy.[143] Amakwa Tia was not only successful at his assignment, but he was also able to expand Asante's authority further southwest by conquering other territories like Aowin and Appolonia in 1721/22.[144] Asante continued its thrust into the northerly Ahafo region where the Bono Kingdom lay, creating series of war between Asante and the powerful Bono Kingdom.[145] Takyiman oral

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[138] Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours, 1700-1807* 40. For readings on Asantehene Osei Tutu's reign, see Fynn, 27-56; Akosua Perbi, "Slavery and the Slave Trade in Pre-Colonial Africa," *Paper Delivered on 5th April*, 2001, 132; McCaskie, "Denkyira in the Making of Asante c. 1660-1720"; Larry W. Yarak, *Asante and the Dutch, 1744-1873* (Oxford England: New York: Clarendon Press, 1990), 10-11.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours, 1700-1807*, 44, 61.
[141] Ibid, 61.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid. For readings of the Asante-Bono relations and conflicts, see Kwasi Konadu, *The Akan People: A Documentary History*, 161-166; Effah-Gyamfi, *Bono Manso: An Archaeological Investigation into Early Akan Urbanism*, 199-221; Merrick Posnansky, "Begho: Life and Times," 95–118; Ivor Wilks, "The Northern Factor in

traditions indicate that between the early eighteenth century to the last three decades of the nineteenth century, Bono and Asante were involved in seven wars in which both countries fought as enemies and, as a vassal state, Bono fought alongside Asante against Asante's enemies.[146]

Historians Nehemia Levtzion and J. K. Fynn and anthropologist Dennis Warren date the first Asante-Bono War to 1722/23.[147] During this war, Asantehene Opoku Ware defeated Bonohene (the king of the Bono Kingdom) Ameyaw Kwaakye, whose government spanned 1712 through 1740, and destroyed Bono towns like Gyaman, Manso, Wenkyi, and Takyiman, the latter being the place where the Nzulezo ancestors temporarily stayed.[148] Following its victory over the Bono Kingdom, Asante turned its attention to the northwesterly Banda Kingdom where Begho was located.[149] Asante reduced Begho to rubble and destroyed other Banda settlements.[150]

The ramifications of Asante's invasions were enormous. For example, the gold and kola nut trade that previously flourished in the Bono-Banda region was significantly disrupted.[151] The political geography of Bono and Banda was also re-oriented. To cite one example, following Asante's conquest of Bono, Asantehene Opoku Ware appointed Bafo Pim, the then Nkoranzahene (chief of Nkoranza, a Bono town) who aided the Asante forces to defeat the Bono

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Ashanti History: Begho and the Mande," *Journal of African History* 2, no. 1 (1961): 25–34; Goody, *The Ethnography of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, West of the White Volta*, 32; Colin Flight, "The Chronology of the Kings and Queenmothers of Bono-Manso, 259–68.

[146] Warren, "The Use and Misuse of Ethnohistorical Data in the Reconstruction of Techiman-Bono (Ghana) History, 369."

[147] Levtzion, Nehemia*, Chiefs and Muslims in West Africa*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1968, 194-195; Warren, "The Use and Misuse of Ethnohistory Data," 369; Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours*, p. 61-62. Also see E. A. Agyeman, "A Note on the Foundation of the Kingdom of Gyaman," *Ghana Notes and Queries* 9 (1966): 36–39; Konadu, *The Akan People*, 164.

[148] Warren, "The Use and Misuse of Ethnohistorical Data in the Reconstruction of Techiman-Bono (Ghana) History," 369; Agyeman, "A Note on the Foundation of the Kingdom of Gyaman," 39.

[149] Ibid.

[150] Posnansky, "Begho: Life and Times," 98; Wilks, "The Northern Factor in Ashanti History: 25–34.

[151] Ibid, Warren, "The Use and Misuse of Ethnohistorical Data in the Reconstruction of Techiman-Bono (Ghana) History," 368.

Kingdom, as the caretaker of several Bono territories, including Gyaman and Takyiman.[152] This appointment subverted several centuries of Bono political structure and power relations as it rendered the true heirs of Bono chieftaincy subservient to Bafo Pim, a sub-chief.[153] What's more, the 1722/23 wars led to the mass dispersion of several Bono and Banda peoples to different locations with many of them seeking shelter in Bonduku (in present-day east-central Ivory Coast), Gonja (Northern Ghana), Sehwi (southwestern Ghana), and in the Gold Coast coastal towns of Mankessim, Kromantse, and Komenda.[154] The Nzulezo ancestors were likely one of the displaced groups who fled the destabilized Bono and Banda Kingdoms for Mankessim on the Gold Coast, although existing oral traditions do not link the Nzulezo migration to the 1722/23 Asante invasion. Nzulezo oral traditions rather relates that political instability in Takyiman forced their ancestors to move further south to Mankessim.[155]

The above logic invariably dates the Nzulezo migration from Takyiman to Mankessim to 1722/23. The route connecting these towns would have been known to the Nzulezo migrants because more than a century before the Nzulezo emigration, several Gold Coasters, particularly the Fante people, plied this route during their ancestral migrations from Takyiman to the coastal towns of Mankessim, Kromantse, Elmina, and Komenda.[156] More so, in the pre-eighteenth century era, the Takyiman-Mankessim route functioned as one of the principal conduits through which merchandise and people flowed from the Gold Coast to the Bono-Banda region and the Mande world.[157] Therefore, it is not farfetched that the itinerant Nzulezo forebears used the

[152] Warren, "The Use and Misuse of Ethnohistorical Data in the Reconstruction of Techiman-Bono (Ghana) History," 369; Agyeman, "A Note on the Foundation of the Kingdom of Gyaman," 39
[153] Ibid.
[154] Agyeman, "A Note on the Foundation of the Kingdom of Gyaman," 36.
[155] John Arthur, Nana Takrika VII, Agya Emuah, Joshua Ezoa, and Safohyenle Kwame in separate interviews with the author, June-July 2017, July 2018, and August 2022, at Nzulezo and Ahumasuazo. Opoku-Agyemang, *Where There Is No Silence*, 42.
[156] Konadu, *The Akan People*, 167-171.
[157] Ibid, 172.

Takyiman-Mankessim road to access the Gold Coast. What is, however, intriguing is the people's choice to settle on the coastal lands of the Gold Coast and not in any of the inland societies like Gonja, Akyem, or Asante. Although Nzulezo tradition emphasizes evu as directing the Nzulezo ancestors to the Gold Coast, we have reason to believe that the then-flourishing Afro-European trade on the coast was the primary factor attracting the Nzulezo forebears to the Gold Coast.

Figure 5: The Nzulezo Migration from Takyiman to Mankessim

Source: map designed by the author using technological tools from Mapbox Studio.

The Atlantic Commerce and the Nzulezo Migration

The Afro-European trade on the Gold Coast developed in the late fifteenth century from Europeans attempt to deflect the flow of West African gold from the

Saharan trade route to an Atlantic maritime route.[158] This mission yielded the Portuguese discovery of Edina (Elmina) in 1471 and, later, the Gold Coast towns of Shama, Axim, and Cape Coast.[159] The Portuguese rapidly cultivated complex and unbalanced trade relations with local Gold Coasters, particularly the Elmina people, which resulted in the construction of the first Portuguese castle (*São Jorge da Mina*) in Elmina in January 1482.[160] Owing to the active involvement of inland Akan groups, including the Akani, Denkyira, Asante, and the Bono, in the Atlantic trade, the Portuguese exported about 8,000 ounces of gold to Lisbon between 1487 and 1489, and 22,500 ounces in 1496.[161]

By the turn of the sixteenth century, news about the booming Portuguese gold trade had reached not only the inland Gold Coast regions of Bono and Banda, but also the Niger Bend and beyond.[162] Contemporaneous European writers like Pacheco Pereira, a Portuguese explorer, and Valentim Fernandes, a German writer and book-printer who published voyagers' anecdotal memoirs, noted in the early years of the sixteenth century that 'Mandinguas' from Mali went as far as to Elmina to trade.[163] "The Mandinguas

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[158] Wilks et al., *Chronicles from Gonja*, 3; Howard W. French, *Born in Blackness: Africa, Africans, and the Making of the Modern World, 1471 to the Second World War* (New York, NY: Liveright, 2021), 4.
[159] For readings on the Portuguese (and generally, European activities) on the Gold Coast, see John Vogt, *Portuguese Rule on the Gold Coast, 1469-1682* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1979); Robert Porter, "European Activity on the Gold Coast, 1620-1667" (PhD Thesis, Pretoria, South Africa, University of South Africa, 1974); K. Y. Daaku, *Denkyira* (Organization of African Unity, Centre for Linguistic and Historical Studies by Oral Tradition, 1970), 4; Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600-1720: A Study of the African Reaction to European Trade* (London: UK: Clarendon, 1970), 21-73, 144-181; J. J. Crooks, *Records Relating to the Gold Coast Settlements from 1750 to 1874* (London, UK: Cass Publishers, 1973); Albert Van Dantzig, *Forts and Castles of Ghana* (Accra: Sedco Publishing, 1999); John Kwadwo Osei-Tutu, ed., *Forts, Castles and Society in West Africa: Gold Coast and Dahomey, 1450-1960* (Brill, 2018), 72-91, 170-242; Larry W. Yarak, *Asante and the Dutch, 1744-1873* (Oxford England: New York: Clarendon Press, 1990); W. E. F. Ward, *A History of Ghana*, 4th edition (George Allen & Unwin, 1959), 50-79.
[160] Vogt, *Portuguese Rule on the Gold Coast, 1469-1682*, 66, 217-220; V. Magalhaes-godinho, *Economie de L'empire Portugais*, 1969, 228-243; Wilks, Levtzion, and Haight, *Chronicles from Gonja*, 3.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Wilks, Levtzion, and Haight, *Chronicles from Gonja*, 4.
[163] Valentim Fernandes et al., *Description de la côte occidentale d'Afrique (Sénégal du Cap de Monte, Archipels)*, Publicações do Centro de Estudos da Guiné Portuguesa (Bissau: Centro de Estudos da Guiné Portuguesa, 1951), 46-47; Raymond Mauny, *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis: Cote Occidentale d'Afrique Du Sud Marocain au Gabon Par*

could be none other than the Wangara (or Dyula)."[164]

The Dyula were not the only distant merchant group participating in the Atlantic trade in the sixteenth-century Gold Coast. Other West African peoples like the Mossi and Fulani, as well as several European nations, including the Dutch, English, Danes, Swedes, French, and the Brandenburgers, had entered the trade by this period.[165] The influx of these diverse populations to the Gold Coast and their competing political and economic activities there engendered significant impacts on Gold Coast's political economy. For instance, trading currencies in the sixteenth- to the eighteenth-century Gold Coast shifted from *nnabuo* or *ntweea* (made from iron bar) and *dutu* (brass currency) to cowries and gold and, later, enslaved people.[166] The Afro-European commerce also helped to generate significant wealth on the Gold Coast, which led to the rise of a class of affluent local magnates called *abrempon*.[167] The *abrempon* would go on to become the brokers of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gold Coast politics and trade, particularly the transatlantic slave trade.[168] These developments constitute what journalist Howard French classifies as the beginning of the "modern world."[169]

If the Dyula, Mossi, and other West African groups, as well as the different European nations, came to the Gold Coast to participate in the flourishing Atlantic

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Duarte Pa (Bissau: Centro de Estudos da Guine Portuguesa, 1956), 123-25. Also cited in Wilks, Levtzion, and Haight, *Chronicles from Gonja*, 4.

[164] Wilks, Levtzion, and Haight, *Chronicles from Gonja*, 4.

[165] Ward, *A History of Ghana*, 50-79; Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600-1720*, 21-114; Dantzig, *Forts and Castles of Ghana*, 1-33.

[166] Kwasi Boaten, "Trade among the Asante of Ghana up to the End of 18th Century," *Research Review* 7, no. 1 (1970), 35,43, 50-52.

[167] Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600-1720*, 96-114; Edward Reynolds, "The Rise and Fall of an African Merchant Class on the Gold Coast 1830-1874 (Progrès et Déclin d'une Classe Commerçante en Gold Coast, 1830-1874)," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 14, no. 54 (1974), 253–64.

[168] Ibid; Ward, *A History of Ghana*, 68; Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours, 1700-1807* 25.

[169] French, *Born in Blackness*, 3-8.

commerce, then, conceivably, the Nzulezo ancestors, who resided in Takyiman by the early eighteenth century, would have been well-informed about this trade, if not already involved in it. Therefore, when the Asante army forced the Nzulezo forebears out of Takyiman in 1722/23, the Nzulezo migrants might have considered the Gold Coast as an appealing site to construct a new life and, perhaps, actively participate in the ongoing Afro-European trade. It is crucial to note that Takyiman was roughly 323 kilometers (200 miles) away from the coast (precisely Mankessim).[170] Therefore, it is not farfetched to speculate that the Nzulezo forebears' decision to initially come to Mankessim might have emerged from their prior awareness of the Takyiman-Mankessim road and the cultural and political significance of the Mankessim township to the coastal Fante people.[171]

Final Journey: From Mankessim to Appolonia (c. 1723 to the mid-1700s)

The Nzulezo oral historian, John Arthur, explains that their ancestors' time in Mankessim was soon disrupted by political conflicts on the coast, which forced them to trek westward to the western Gold Coast.[172] Their journey took them through the Gold Coast towns of Kromantse, Anomabu, Cape Coast, Asebu, Shama, and Ahanta, with the

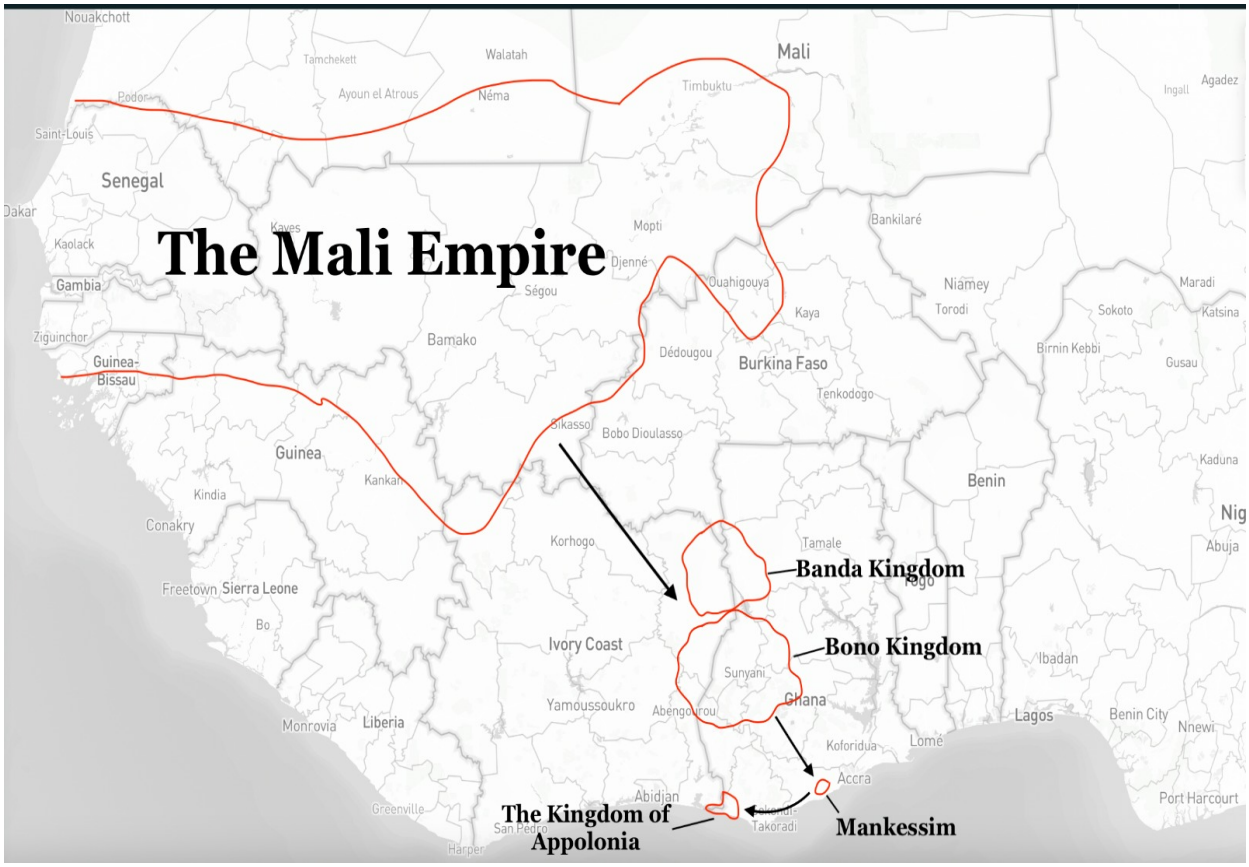
[170] Google Maps estimates the ground distance between Takyiman and the coastal town of Mankessim to be roughly 323 kilometers (200 miles). Therefore, a journey on foot from Takyiman to Mankessim might have lasted a few days, perhaps, less than five days, granted there were no challenges like wars or deaths along the route.
[171] Mankessim, originally known as Adoagyir, was the first location where the ancestors of the Borbor (or Bono Bono) Fante settled during their pre-seventeenth-century migrations to the Gold Coast. Fante oral traditions relate that three warrior leaders namely, *Obrumankoma*, *Odapagyan*, and *Oson* led the early Fante travelers from Takyiman to the coast. *Obrumankoma* and *Odapagyan* died on the journey, leaving *Oson* as the leader to bring the Fante migrant to Adoagyir at an unspecified date—some historians arguably say 1252. *Oson* and his people conquered the original settlers of Adoagyir and establish the first Fante kingdom there, naming it *oman kese mu* (big or large town). *Oman-kese-mu* later became Mankessim. In 1653, a civil war broke out in Mankessim, forcing the Fante group to split and move in different directions to found new polities, including Kwaman and Abora. Even in dispersion, the different Fante populations regard Mankessim as a culturally, politically, and economically significant town where Fante chieftains convene to make essential decisions, offer prayers, and conduct trade. Little wonder nineteenth-century Fante leaders met in Mankessim to constitute the Fante Confederacy and named Mankessim as the Confederacy's capital. See Konadu, *The Akan People,* 167-174; Rebecca Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Boydell & Brewer, 2014); Rebecca Shumway, "The Fante Shrine of Nananom Mpow and the Atlantic Slave Trade in Southern Ghana," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 44, no. 1 (2011): 27–44.
[172] John Arthur in an interview with the author, June 2018, at Nzulezo.

latter three serving as principal sojourning locations.[173] John Arthur clarifies that the Nzulezo ancestors lived in Asebu, Shama, and Ahanta for decades and constructed relationships with the people there before coming to the Kingdom of Appolonia, the southwestern-most territory of the Gold Coast.[174] The people arrived in the Appolonian Kingdom in the mid-eighteenth century when Amihyia Kpanyinli was king.[175]

Considering Nzulezo people's departure from Takyiman sometime in 1722/23 and their arrival in Appolonia in the mid-1700s, it is safe to argue that the Nzulezo ancestral migration from the Gold Coast hinterland (i.e., Takyiman-Bono region) to their Appolonian destination lasted about three to four decades. These years might have afforded the Nzulezo ancestors the chance to not only participate in the eighteenth-century Afro-European trade on the Gold Coast, but also immerse themselves in the socio-cultural and political life of their Gold Coast host societies, particularly the Fante-speaking towns of Mankessim, Asebu, and Shama. While there is no specific evidence to support the following supposition, it is possible that the Nzulezo ancestors adopted the Fante language or intermarried with the Fante. Further research using historical linguistics may provide insight into possible Fante elements in the Nzulezo past.

[173] Ibid; Opoku-Agyemang, *Where There Is No Silence*, 42.
[174] John Arthur in an interview with the author, June 2018, at Nzulezo. See Opoku-Agyemang, *Where There Is No Silence*, 42; J. Y. Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema" (M.A. Thesis, Accra: GH, University of Ghana, Legon, 1965), 12. I visited Asebu, Shama, and Ahanta to inquire about the historical connections between these towns and the Nzulezo people, but my inquiries yielded no meaningful discoveries. The few community leaders of Asebu, Shama, and Ahanta I spoke with did not remember any histories linking the Nzulezo people to their respective societies.
[175] Henry Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa; with a Brief History of the African Company.* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1812), 53; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 48.

Figure 6: The Journey from Mankessim to Appolonia



Source: map designed by the author using technological tools from Mapbox Studio.

Conclusion

Figure 6 above details the pre-colonial Nzulezo ancestral migration from the Mande world to the southwestern Gold Coast. The Nzulezo people's choice to move from their indeterminate ancestral homeland in the Mali Kingdom to the Gold Coast could be interpreted as a pragmatic determination born from the critical need for survival, security, and a better livelihood. While significant aspects of the people's origin and migration histories remain vague and subject to speculative interpretations, the available Nzulezo oral traditions demonstrate that the Nzulezo ancestral migration might have commenced sometime between the fifteenth century and the 1670s, possibly the second half of the seventeenth century. On their way to the Gold Coast, the Nzulezo migrants stayed in

Takyiman, located in the Bono Kingdom, for about four decades or longer. During this time, they likely assimilated into the Bono society. Their time in the Bono Kingdom might have spanned the second half of the seventeenth century to 1722/23, when the Asante Kingdom invaded and destroyed the Bono and Banda Kingdoms. The destabilization of the Bono-Banda region likely forced the Nzulezo sojourners to come to the Gold Coast in 1722 or 1723, first settling in Mankessim.

While spirituality—i.e., Nzulezo ancestors' adherence to evu's dictates—played a role in shaping the migration decisions of the people in Nzulezo, we have reason to believe that the economic and political conditions of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Gold Coast, particularly the 1722/23 Asante conquests of the Bono and Banda Kingdoms and the Afro-European trade along the coast, had a greater impact on their migration decisions and trajectory. These political and economic factors likely impelled the Nzulezo forebears to journey from Mankessim to the Kingdom of Appolonia—a migration spanning at least three decades from 1722/23 to the mid-1700s. Given the people's critical need for "security" from political conflicts and their quest for a better livelihood, their settling in the Appolonian Kingdom suggests that they must have considered Appolonia a relatively *peaceful* territory that promised the kind of life they so desired. However, was Appolonia truly peaceful? Chapter two addresses this question and unpacks the history surrounding Nzulezo people's arrival and settling in the Appolonian kingdom.

CHAPTER TWO:

Appolonia and the Arrival of the Nzulezo Ancestors

The preceding chapter demonstrates that the Nzulezo ancestral migrations from the Middle Niger to the different Gold Coast societies hinged upon two main factors: i.e., the people's search for refuge from political conflicts and their eagerness to fulfill evu's (their snail deity's) demands. These factors shaped Nzulezo people's decisions to emigrate from their indeterminate ancestral home in the ancient Mali Empire to Takyiman, Mankesim, Shama, Ahanta, and, finally, Appolonia. It is one thing to have reasons to live in a particular society and another to be admitted into that society. The itinerant Nzulezo ancestors may have had reasons for permanently settling in Appolonia, but those reasons did not necessarily grant them admission into the Appolonian Kingdom. This chapter examines why Appolonians accepted the Nzulezo people. It argues that three main conditions in Appolonia made the Nzulezo admission and assimilation into the Appolonian society relatively seamless. These conditions were (1) the open border policy practiced by eighteenth-century Appolonian kings, particularly King Amihyia Kpanyinli who reigned from 1758 to 1779, (2) the *amonle* covenant—a socio-cultural system in pre-colonial Appolonia, and (3) Appolonia's favorable environment, notably its *waterscape*.[176]

This chapter is organized into three main sections. The first section discusses the geographical and cultural constitution of the Nzema society to which the people of Appolonia

[176] Similar to what water historians Heather Hoag and Matthew Bender do, I use *waterscape* in opposition to *landscape* to represent the nature, qualities, and functions of Appolonia's water systems and bodies of water. My use of waterscape also signifies how Appolonians and other Gold Coast migrants perceived, approached, and interacted with the Appolonian bodies of water over time. For readings on *waterscape*, see Heather J. Hoag, *Developing the Rivers of East and West Africa: An Environmental History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 4; Matthew V. Bender, *Water Brings No Harm: Management Knowledge and the Struggle for the Waters of Kilimanjaro* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2019), 9. For readings on King Amihyia Kpanyinli's reign, see Pim van den Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764: A Detailed Inquiry about How the Dutch Lost the War" (MPhil Thesis, Leiden, Netherlands, Leiden University, 2012), 8; Pierluigi Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa: Appolonia from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 215.

belonged. The Nzema people occupied the southwestern-most territories of the Gold Coast. The second section examines the founding of the Appolonian Kingdom in the early eighteenth century and its progressive development through the second half of that century. The last section examines the arrival and admission of the Nzulezo ancestors to Appolonia.

Nzema and Appolonia: The Identity Question

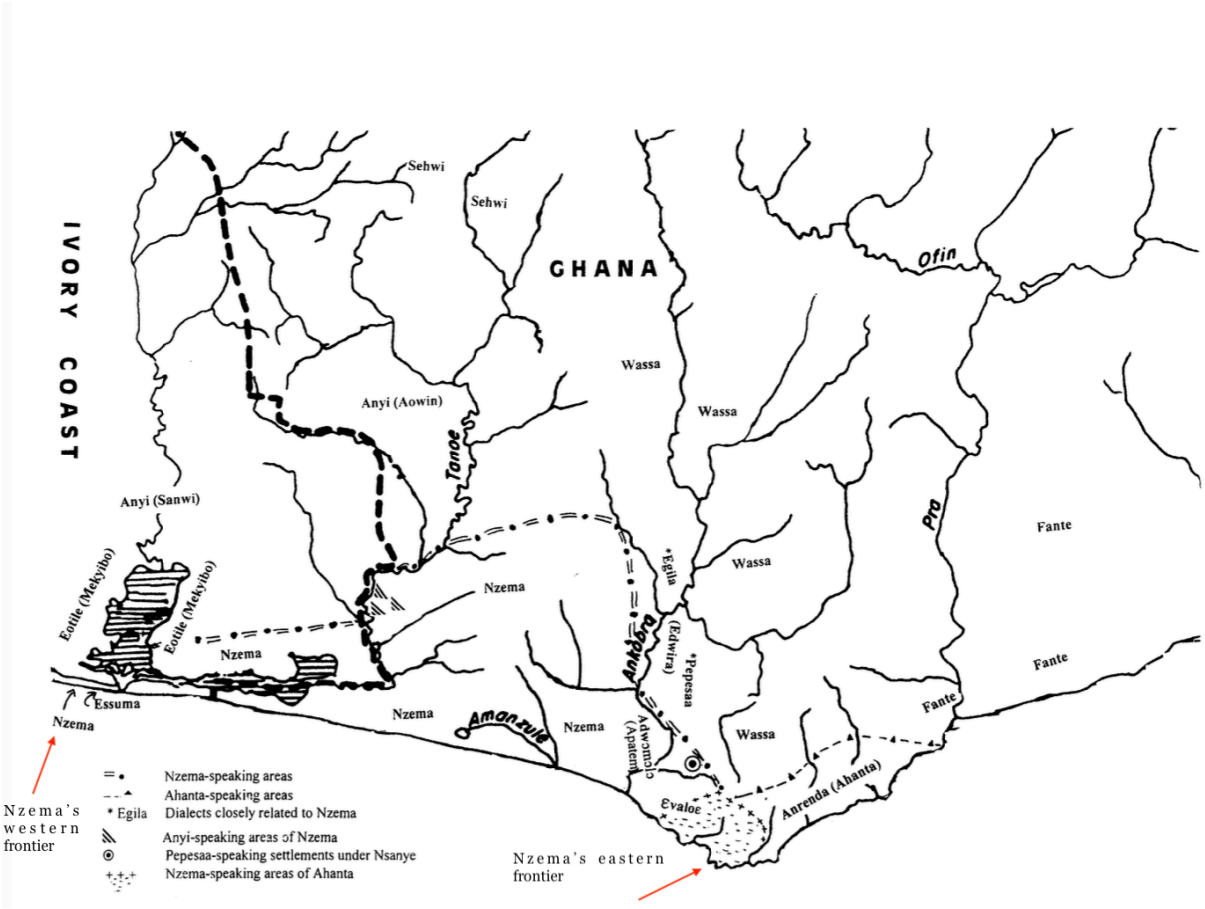
Appolonia was a pre-colonial kingdom located in southwestern Gold Coast.[177] Its people constituted one of the Akan ethnic groups, who originally identified as *nzema*.[178] The *nzema* ethnonym is believed to have developed from the people's encounters with neighboring Sehwi (also spelled Sefwi) and Anyi ethnic groups, who lived in the interior regions of the western Gold Coast.[179] Historians J. Y. Ackah and Martha Alibah explain that during their ancestral migration to the western Gold Coast sometime before 1500, the founders of the *nzema maanle* (Nzema world or country) traveled through the lands of Sehwi and Anyi.[180] Failing to lucidly describe their ethnic ancestry, the Sehwi people classified the itinerant group as *nzenlema*, which translates to "those who passed by," and the Anyi people called them *menzema*, meaning, "I do not know."[181] Ackah and Alibah suggest that the *nzema* identity developed from *nzenlema* and/or *menzema*, a supposition that has received corroborations from some present-day Appolonian

[177] Pierluigi Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa: Appolonia from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 1; R. W. Sanderson, "The History of Nzima up to 1874," *The Gold Coast Review* 1, no. 1 (1925), 93; Martha Alibah, *A History of the Nzema in Pre-Colonial Ghana* (Accra: GH: Woeli Publishing Services, 2013), 7; J. Y. Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema" (M.A. Thesis, Accra: GH, University of Ghana, Legon, 1965), 7-8.
[178] A. Adu Boahen, "The Origins of the Akan.," *Ghana Notes and Queries.*, no. 9 (1966), 4; Alibah, *A History of the Nzema in Pre-Colonial Ghana*, 6; Martha Alibah, "A History of the Nzema from the Pre-Colonial to the Colonial Era" (PhD Thesis, Cape Coast, Ghana, University of Cape Coast, 2005), 6-7; Sanderson, "The History of Nzima up to 1874," 93; Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 7-8; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 1.
[179] J. Y. Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 7-8; Martha Alibah, "A History of the Nzema from the Pre-Colonial to the Colonial Era," 4; Alibah, *A History of the Nzema in Pre-Colonial Ghana*, 6.
[180] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 7-8; Alibah, "A History of the Nzema from the Pre-Colonial to the Colonial Era," 6.
[181] Ibid.

leaders, including Abusuapanyinli Amihyia (the head of the *Ndwea* ruling family of Western Nzema), Odikro Nkrumah (the chief of Sanwoma), and Thomas Edwa (a royal and elder of the Essiama town).[182]

Nzema (also spelled Nzima) came to represent not only the ethnic identity of the migrant group but also their language and territory. Historian Pierliugi Valsecchi espouses that the Nzema people settled in the region stretching from Cape Three Point on the western Gold Coast to the southeastern shores of the Aby Lagoon in the present-day Ivory Coast—see Figure 7.[183]

Figure 7: The Broader Nzema Territory



Copyright: This map was adapted from historian Pierluigi Valsecchi's "The 'True Nzema': A Layered Identity,"

[182] Ibid. Abusuapanyinli Amihyia, Odikro Nkrumah, and Thomas Edwa in multiple interviews with the author, June 2018 and August 2022, in Beyin, Samwoma, and Essiama.
[183] Pierluigi Valsecchi, "The 'True Nzema': A Layered Identity," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 71, no. 3 (2001), 394; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 2, 7.

"Figure 7 (cont'd) p. 395.

The eastern-most Nzema society was Axim, which bordered the Ahanta Kingdom to the west. In contrast, the western-most Nzema territory, New Town, lay at the eastern bank of the Tano-Dwene-Ehy river basin.[184] West of this river basin lived the Ehotile and Anyi peoples of Mekyibo, Sanwi, and Aowin.[185] North of the Nzema territory lay the Wassa Kingdom, an Akan group, and to its south was the Atlantic Sea.[186]

Vinigi Grottanelli, the pioneer Italian ethnologist of Appolonia, demonstrates that the Nzema people and their language were not altogether homogenous.[187] Within the *nzema maanle* (i.e., Nzema country), there existed diverse Nzema dialects and sub-regional polities, including the Apatem society, whose people spoke a variant of the Nzema language called Adwɔmɔlɔ, and the Axim and Nsein people, whose dialect was Evaloɛ.[188] There also existed the Azane, Akoamu, Etile, Bɔmuakpole, Elɛmgbenle, Dwɔmɔlɔ (or Jomoro), and Afona, who lived westward of the Ankobra River and spoke Nzema.[189]

The peoples of Azane, Akoamu, Etile, Bɔmuakpole, Elɛmgbenle, Jomoro, and Afona (hereafter called Azane et al.) lived in the area bounded to the east by the Ankobra River and to the west by the Tanoɛ (or Tano) River and the Dwene, Ehy, and Aby Rivers—see Figure 2 above (on page 12).[190] This territory would later be known as the Kingdom of Appolonia.[191] Henry

[184] Valsecchi, "The 'True Nzema,'" 394-95.
[185] Ibid
[186] Ibid, 395.
[187] V. Grottanelli, *Una società guineana: gli Nzema*, vol. 1 (Bollati Boringhieri, 1977), 34, cited in Valsecchi, "The 'True Nzema,'" 396.
[188] Ibid; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 41.
[189] Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 41.
[190] Alibah, "A History of the Nzema from the Pre-Colonial to the Colonial Era," 7; Valsecchi, "The 'True Nzema,'" 393; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 41; Sanderson, "The History of Nzima up to 1874," 95; Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 1-2.
[191] Sanderson, "The History of Nzima up to 1874," 95; Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 6-7; Alibah, "A History of the Nzema from the Pre-Colonial to the Colonial Era," 7; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 25.

Meredith, an eighteenth-century governor of the British settlements on the Gold Coast, stipulates that the Appolonian Kingdom stretched about 100 miles from the Ankobra River to the Tano-Dwene-Ehy river basin and 20 miles inland, making a total area of 20,000 square miles.[192] However, historian R. S. Sanderson believes that the Appolonian territory was roughly 1,000 square miles.[193] While it is challenging to establish specific geographic limits for Appolonia's inland borders, Google Map estimation of the kingdom's coastal terrain shows a ground distance of about 112 kilometers (70 mile) from the Ankobra River to the Tano-Dwene-Ehy river basin—an estimate that falls marginally below Meredith's assessment.[194]

Grottanelli and Valsecchi maintain that the people of Appolonia (i.e., the Azane et al. groups) were classified as the "true Nzema" in contrast to the other Nzema groups residing in the east of the Ankobra River.[195] The "true Nzema" notion developed from two main conditions: (1) throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century, Appolonia became the most consistent expression of the Nzema identity through culture, trade, and politics, and (2) while the other Nzema groups maintained their respective identities, the people of Appolonia changed their name from Appolonia to Nzema in 1927, signifying the people's reinvention and assertiveness of the pristine *nzema* identity. [196]

It is, therefore, essential to note that *nzema* as an ethnonym, language, and geographical territory was a broader terminology describing the peoples of Axim, Nsein, Apatem, Egile,

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[192] Henry Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa; with a Brief History of the African Company.* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1812), 64.
[193] Sanderson, "The History of Nzima up to 1874," 95.
[194] It was relatively easy to determine the ground distance of the Appolonian coast using Google Maps because that area is geographically well defined. However, the inland areas proved very challenging as those lands are heavily forested and have no specific topographical markers to establish their territorial limits.
[195] Valsecchi, "The 'True Nzema, '" 393; Alibah, "A History of the Nzema from the Pre-Colonial to the Colonial Era," 7; Grottanelli, *Una società guineana*, 13.
[196] Valsecchi, "The 'True Nzema,'" 393; Alibah, "A History of the Nzema from the Pre-Colonial to the Colonial Era," 5.

Edwira, Jomoro, Elɛmgbenle, and others who lived in southwestern Gold Coast. In contrast, Appolonia represented a fraction of the Nzema *maanle* (country). It primarily comprised the peoples of Azane, Akoamu, Etile, Bɔmuakpole, Elɛmgbenle, Jomoro, and Afona, who lived in the territory sandwiched by the Ankobra and Tano-Dwene-Ehy Rivers. This study focuses on Appolonia, the region where the Nzulezo ancestors settled.

Appolonia: A History to mid-1700s

The pre-eighteenth-century history of Appolonia is primarily conveyed through oral traditions, which explain that the ancestors of Appolonia, like the founders of the broader Nzema society, originated from Western Sudan.[197] Although Sanderson has proposed the Nile basin in Eastern Sudan as the Appolonian homeland, her supposition seems far-fetched relative to the Western Sudan notion.[198] Appolonian traditions do not offer any precise date for when their ancestral migration began and when the people settled in their Gold Coast territory. However, some Portuguese sources trace an Appolonian presence on the southwestern Gold Coast to pre-1471.[199] For example, Andre Donhela, a Portuguese traveler and writer, explains that after the Portuguese arrived in Elmina in 1471, they later encountered the people of Appolonia, who, by then, resided in their Gold Coast territory.[200] Donhela's observation suggests that Appolonians

[197] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 9-11; Martha Alibah, *A History of the Nzema in Pre-Colonial Ghana*, vii-4.
[198] Sanderson, "The History of Nzima up to 1874," 95. For a detailed account of Appolonia's origin history, see Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 167-198 (chapter 7).
[199] Adré Donhela, *Descriçao Da Serra Leoa e Dos Rios de Guiné Do Cabo Verde (1625)/An Account of Sierra Leone and the Rivers of Guinea of Cape Verde (1625)* (Lisboa: Junta de Investigações Científicas do Ultramar, 1977), cited in Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 20; Alibah, *A History of the Nzema in Pre-Colonial Ghana*, vii, 3.
[200] Historian Martha Alibah, for instance, discusses the Appolonian-Portuguese encounter (see Alibah, *A History of the Nzema in Pre-Colonial Ghana*, 3). For works on the Portuguese activities on the Gold Coast, see Avelina Teixeira da Mota and P. E. H. Hair, *East of Mina: Afro-European Relations on the Gold Coast in the 1550s and 1560s: An Essay with Supporting Documents / A. Teixeira Da Mota and P.E.H. Hair.* (Madison, WI: African Studies Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1988); John Vogt, *Portuguese Rule on the Gold Coast, 1469-1682* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1979); Harvey M. Feinberg, *Africans and Europeans in West Africa: Elminans and Dutchmen on the Gold Coast During the Eighteenth Century* (American Philosophical Society, 1989).

were already settled on the southwestern Gold Coast well before 1471.

Although little is known of Appolonia's sixteenth and seventeenth-century history, the scholarship reveals that Appolonia transformed from being small pockets of village settlements to a polity by the turn of the eighteenth century.[201] Ackah, Alibah, Sanderson, and Valsecchi explain that the Azane et al. ethnic groups that occupied the lands between the Ankobra and Tano River basins received several migrant groups (e.g., the peoples of Eikwe, Anyinase, and Nkroful, the hometown of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president) into their territory throughout the early seventeenth century.[202] These migrant groups created scattered settlements, which, by the turn of the eighteenth century, crystallized into a centralized state like that of the Asante, Akyem, and Akwamu, which had a single male monarch as their political leader and several supporting political rulers as sub-chiefs.[203] This newly founded centralized state became known as Appolonia, an identity believed to have derived from the people's encounter with the Portuguese.[204] The Portuguese are said to have sighted Appolonia on a day (possibly, February 9) that commemorated the festival of Saint Appolonia, an Egyptian Christian virgin who was killed and later martyred in Alexandria for her Christian faith.[205] In reference to this festival, the Portuguese named the Azane et al. groups and their region Appolonia.[206]

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[201] Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 19, 22. Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764," 7.
[202] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 12-14; Alibah, *A History of the Nzema in Pre-Colonial Ghana*, 19-20; Sanderson, "The History of Nzima up to 1874," 98; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 25.
[203] Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 25.
[204] Ibid, 20, 25; Alibah, *A History of the Nzema in Pre-Colonial Ghana*, 15.
[205] Jean Barbot, *Déscription de La Côte d'Or de Guinée in Déscription des Côtes d'Afrique.* (London, UK: Manuscript, PRO, 1688), 2; René Baesjou, "The Historical Evidence in Old Maps and Charts of Africa with Special Reference to West Africa," *History in Africa* 15 (1988), 65; G. E. Metcalfe, *MacLean of the Gold Coast: The Life and Times of George MacLean 1801-1847* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1962), 77; Alibah, "A History of the Nzema from the Pre-Colonial to the Colonial Era," 5; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 20; Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 4.
[206] Ibid.

Figure 8: A View of Cape Appolonia from the Atlantic Sea, c. 1688

Copyright: The image was obtained from the British National Archives, London, United Kingdom.

In the first half of the eighteenth century, the Kingdom of Appolonia rapidly developed into political and economic prominence primarily because of "the military, diplomatic, commercial, and financial activities of four leaders belonging to the same generation. They were Anɔ Bile Aka, Anɔ Bɔnlɔmane, Boa Kpanyinli, and Amihyia Kpanyinli, (all of whom were fathered by Anɔ Bile and believed to have reigned between 1700 and 1758)."[207] Anɔ Bile is arguably believed to be the founder of the Appolonian Kingdom.[208] He belonged to the *Ndwea* (dog) clan, which replaced the erstwhile *Nvavile* (parrot) ruling clan sometime before 1700.[209] Following the death of Anɔ Bile in the early eighteenth century, his sons inherited his assets and extended his power to the western banks of the Ankobra River, setting themselves up as the leading commercial players in the sub-region.[210]

[207] Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764," 7; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 167.
[208] Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 22, 168; Baesjou, "The Historical Evidence in Old Maps and Charts of Africa," 72; Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764," 7; G. A. Robertson, *Notes on Africa: Particularly Those Parts Which Are Situated Between Cape Verd and The River Congo* (London, UK: Sherwood, Neely and Jones, Paternoster Row, 1819), 105. Pierluigi Valsecchi has contradictorily stated elsewhere that Kema Kpanyinli was rather the founder and first ruler of Appolonia. See Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 45-46.
[209] Sanderson, "The History of Nzima up to 1874," 96; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 169; Alibah, *The European Presence in Nzemaland (1550-1957)*, 10.
[210] Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 167.

By this period, the Dutch West India Company (WIC) was stationed in Axim, and their political and commercial activities in the town had transformed Axim into an important trading center.[211] Axim was about 4.5 kilometers (2.8 miles) away from the Appolonian western border, the Ankobra River.[212] It is, therefore, not surprising that the political and economic growth of Appolonia in the early eighteenth century impinged on the WIC's trade in Axim, causing severe tension between Appolonians and the Dutch.[213] The Appolonian-Dutch tenuous relation was dramatized in three lethal wars from 1762 to 1764, in which Appolonia routed the WIC and their allied Axim people on all three occasions.[214] Amihyia Kpanyinli, the fourth son of Anɔ Bile, was by then the king or *bɛlɛmgbunli*—the Nzema word for king—of Appolonia and the mastermind behind Appolonia's victories.[215] Amihyia's victories earned him distinguished renown on the Gold Coast so much that his name became a symbolic identity for Appolonians.[216] Several European writers, including Dutchman J. G. Schnerr, and Englishmen T. E. Bowdich, Brodie Cruickshank, Consul Joseph Dupuis, and Francis Swanzy, referenced Appolonia in their writings as *Amanahea*, *Ammoniah*, *Americhia*, *Ahmelyiah*, and *Amelhayia*—these references were incorrect spellings of Amihyia.[217]

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[211] Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764," 1-4; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 33-34. For further readings on the Dutch activities in Axim, see Albert Van Dantzig, *Forts and Castles of Ghana* (Accra: Sedco Publishing, 1999); John Kwadwo Osei-Tutu, ed., *Forts, Castles and Society in West Africa: Gold Coast and Dahomey, 1450-1960* (Brill, 2018); Vogt, *Portuguese Rule on the Gold Coast, 1469-1682*; W. E. F. Ward, *A History of Ghana*, 4th edition (George Allen & Unwin, 1959).
[212] The distance from Axim and the Ankobra River was calculated using Google Maps.
[213] Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764," 9-10.
[214] Ibid.
[215] Ibid, 18-24.
[216] Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 2, 19, 21-22; Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764," 2; Alibah, "A History of the Nzema from the Pre-Colonial to the Colonial Era," 5; Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema, " 4.
[217] F. Swanzy, "Narrative of the Expedition to Appolonia, from Cape Coast Castle, in 1848. CO 96/27, "Colonial Office Papers," The National Archives (hereafter referenced as TNA), London, United Kingdom; F. Swanzy, "Minutes of Evidence Taken before the Select Committee on West Coast of Africa; together with the minutes of evidence, appendix, and index. Part I.—Report and evidence, April 29, 1842 (904). 551 551-II, United Kingdom Parliamentary Papers, "19th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers," London, United Kingdom; "Extracts

Amihyia Kpanyinli and the Nzulezo People

The history of Nzulezo's ancestral arrival in Appolonia is intricately tied to the life and government of *bɛlɛmgbunli* (king) Amihyia Kpanyinli. The Nzulezo ancestors are believed to have entered Appolonia at the time that Amihyia was king.[218] Amihyia is believed to have ascended to the Appolonian throne in 1758 when his predecessor and brother, Boa Kpanyinli, failed to maintain his position as *bɛlɛmgbunli*.[219] Historian Assum describes Boa as reticent and subservient to the Europeans, mainly the Dutch.[220] Amihyia was the direct opposite. Assum casts Amihyia as being unsympathetic to Europeans, whom he fervently prevented from permanently settling in Appolonia or meddling in Appolonian political affairs.[221] To local Gold Coasters whom Amihyia did not consider as allies, he was allegedly ruthless.[222]

J. A. de Marrée, a Dutch official, offers a chilling characterization of Amihyia. Marrée describes Amihyia as a cunning and callous character who created wealth through robbing fellow "Africans" who traversed the trading routes near Appolonia.[223] Amihyia and his men allegedly would hide in the bushes along trade routes and indiscriminately fire their weapons at itinerant traders.[224] He would then collect and sell the merchandise that the fleeing traders would leave

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from Report on Appolonia, 1869." Furley Collection, N86 1870–1872 Journal, pp. 42–48, "Heritage Materials," University of Ghana Digital Collections (UGSpace), University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, Ghana.
Also see Thomas E. Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee* (London: UK: John Murray, 1819), 168, 217; Joseph Dupuis, *Journal of a Residence in Ashantee: Comprising Notes and Researches Relative to the Gold Coast, and the Interior of Western Africa, Chiefly Collected from Arabic Mss. and Information Communicated by the Moslems of Guinea* (London, UK: H. Colburn, 1824), 230, 234; Brodie Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast of Africa: Including an Account of the Native Tribes, and Their Intercourse with Europeans* (London, UK: Hurst and Blackett, 1853), 1, 44, 47; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 21.

[218] Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa; with a Brief History of the African Company*, 53.

[219] Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764," 8.

[220] Ibid.

[221] Ibid.

[222] Ibid.

[223] Ibid; quoted from J. A. de Marrée, *Reizen op en beschrijving van de goudkust van Guinea: voorzien met de noodige ophelderingen, journalen, kaart, platen en bewijzen; gedurende een lang verblijf aldaar opgezameld en grootendeels zelve gezien* (Gebroeders van Cleef, 1817), 78.

[224] Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764," 7.

behind, or distribute them among his political allies in exchange for political allegiance.[225] Amihyia is also described as "deviously" attracting European traders to the shores of Appolonia by flying representational flags of European ships that sailed past his kingdom.[226] Through this tactic, Amihyia purportedly made significant wealth from the Atlantic trade with Europeans, particularly the Portuguese.[227] Jan P. T. Huydercoper, a mid-eighteenth-century Dutch commissioner at Fort Saint Anthony in Axim, noted that Amihyia gained the upper hand in the Portuguese trade, purchasing upwards of two to three hundred rolls of tobacco annually from their ships.[228]

Amihyia's rise to economic prominence helped to entrench his political power and position on the western Gold Coast. Supposedly exchanging economic goods and wealth for political allegiance from other Gold Coast polities, Amihyia gained immense political power and consolidated the Appolonian Kingdom.[229] He, like his successors, is described as an absolute monarch who ruled through terror tactics and tyranny.[230] Marrée again characterizes Amihyia as a king who killed anyone who opposed his commercial empire expansion.[231] Amihyia was also allegedly known for playing a deadly game in which he indiscriminately throws a knife at his followers and whomever the knife struck would be decapitated.[232] Henry Meredith discusses one of Amihyia's alleged tyrannical acts as follows.

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[225] Ibid.
[226] Baesjou, "The Historical Evidence in Old Maps and Charts of Africa," 30; Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764," 7.
[227] Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764," 8.
[228] "Letter Cmd. Huydecoper to Lord X," September 14, 1763. NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv.nr. 929, Folio: 134F; cited in Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764," 8.
[229] Baesjou, "The Historical Evidence in Old Maps and Charts of Africa," 72; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 22, 168; Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764," 7.
[230] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 3; Henry Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa; with a Brief History of the African Company.*, 40; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 22; Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764," 7.
[231] Marrée, *Reizen op en beschrijving van de goudkust van Guinea*, 78.
[232] Ibid, 79.

> A leopard had committed many depredations in the neighborhood of the king's residence and although every vigilance was practiced, and many methods employed to destroy him, yet by his extraordinary sagacity he eluded them all. At length the king, wearied with the caution of the animal and enraged at the ravages he committed, summoned the principal men before him, and told them that he had come to the resolution of securing the animal, even at the risk of half of his subjects; and gave orders, that the thicket where the animal kept concealed should be surrounded, and that he should be brought to him alive! This extraordinary order was obeyed, and the animal secured, but not without the loss of life to some, and mortal wounds and severe laceration being inflicted upon others. [233]

In such highhanded ways did Amihyia allegedly rule Appolonia. The so-called despotic rule of Amihyia reverberates similar negative portrayals of several pre-colonial African regimes, especially in pre-colonial European travelogues. Historian Adam Jones writes about how some seventeenth-century German travelers to West and West-Central Africa derisively depicted some pre-colonial African societies, notably the Kongo, as barbaric and inherently belligerent. For example, Müller, a seventeenth-century German traveler, wrote that the seventeenth-century Kongo leaders and warriors walked around with human skulls hung around their necks, symbolizing their renown for the numerous kills they have made in wars.[234] Africanist scholars like John Thornton, Robin Law, Edna Bay, and Cameron Monroe have also described the regimes of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Dahomey kings as allegedly despotic—these kings heavily relied on fear tactics to consolidate and expand their political power in the West

[233] Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa; with a Brief History of the African Company*, 65.
[234] Adam Jones, *German Sources for West African History, 1599-1669*, Studien Zur Kulturkunde (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1983), 37-38.

African slave coast.[235] In a similar vein have Assum and Valsecchi depicted *bɛlɛmgbunli* Amihyia. Entrenching his political position in Appolonia and southwestern Gold Coast, Amihyia is professed to have used tyranny and fear tactics.

The above negative characterizations of *bɛlɛmgbunli* Amihyia and other pre-colonial African rulers must be received with much scrutiny. Scholars like Adam Jones and Johannes Fabian, an Africanist anthropologist, challenge these contemptuous European depictions of pre-colonial African rulers, arguing that the sources of such information, which often take the form of European travel accounts, are predominantly stereotypical and sensational.[236] Examining the encounters between nineteenth-century European travelers and their African hosts, Fabian further argues that most of these pre-colonial European writers met with Africans in an extraordinary state influenced by opiates, alcohol, sex, fever, fatigue, and violence, which influenced the formers' perceptions and writings.[237] Hence, European travelogues were severely characterized by fixed ideas and fabrications.[238] Jones and Fabian, therefore, caution us to accept European travel accounts with much scrutiny because they are anything less than authoritative.

Following Jones' and Fabian's recommendations concerning travelogues, historian Harry Odamtten approaches Ga oral histories about the seventeenth-century Ga female King Dode

[235] See John K. Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa, 1500-1800*, (London; New York: Routledge, 2000); Robin Law, "Dahomey and the Slave Trade: Reflections on the Historiography of the Rise of Dahomey," *The Journal of African History* 27, no. 2 (1986): 237–67; Edna G. Bay, *Wives of the Leopard: Gender, Politics, and Culture in the Kingdom of Dahomey* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1998); J. Cameron Monroe, "In the Belly of Dan: Space, History, and Power in Precolonial Dahomey," *Current Anthropology* 52, no. 6 (2011): 769–98; James H. Sweet, *Domingos Álvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013).
[236] Adam Jones, "Travelers' Accounts as Sources," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.238; Johannes Fabian, *Out of Our Minds: Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 1.
[237] Fabian, *Out of Our Minds*, 3.
[238] Ibid.

Akabi with critical examination.[239] Odamtten argues that, like the often self-gratifying accounts of European travelers, specific Ga oral traditions about Dode Akabi tend to depict the only Ga female king as "wicked" and despotic.[240] According to Odamtten, Akabi, like King Ahebi Ugbabe, the sole female political ruler of twentieth-century Nsukka-Igbo, crossed gender boundaries to not only perform masculinity (or male roles) but also alter Ga gender categories and govern Ga elderly men in a recognized patriarchal society.[241] Odamtten espouses that for Akabi's unprecedented gender and political exploits, the Ga may have considered her as "ruling too much," as historian Nwando Achebe writes about the Nsukka-Igbo saying to King Ahebi, "You have ruled too much."[242]

The negative characterizations of *bɛlɛmgbunli* Amihyia can be deconstructed against the backdrop of Jones', Fabian's, Odamtten's, and Achebe's frameworks. The European authors of Amihyia's negative depictions, the eighteenth-century Dutch writers J. P. T. Huydercoper and J. A. de Marrée, and the English writer Henry Meredith, likely obtained their information from some local Gold Coasters, perhaps individuals from Appolonia. Such reports tend to lose authenticity as they pass from one person to another. Therefore, Huydercoper's, Marrée's, and Meredith's contemptuous characterization of Amihyia might have been overstated if not fabricated. Moreover, these eighteenth-century European writers might have considered Amihyia as "ruling too much," especially for his three-time victories over the Dutch and his success in

[239] The Ga society constitute one of the ancient pre-colonial societies on the southeastern Gold Coast. They mostly inhabited the lands stretching from the present-day Accra to the Volta Region. For readings on the Ga, see Carl Christian Reindorf, *History of the Gold Coast and Asante*, Third (Accra, GH: Ghana Universities Press, 2007); John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000); David K. Henderson-Quartey, *The Ga of Ghana: History & Culture of a West African People* (London: D.K. Henderson-Quartey, 2002).
[240] Harry N. K. Odamtten, "Dode Akabi: A Reexamination of the Oral and Textual Narrative of a 'Wicked' Female King," *Journal of Women's History* 27, no. 3 (2015), 77, https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2015.0034.
[241] Ibid, 78. For readings on King Ahebi Ugbabe, see Nwando Achebe, *The Female King of Colonial Nigeria: Ahebi Ugbabe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011).
[242] Ibid.

preventing European powers, including the Dutch and the French, from occupying the Appolonian Kingdom or controlling Appolonia's politics and trade. Indeed, as the African proverb suggests, until the lions have their own historians, the story of the hunt will always glorify the hunter. Without alternative histories that center Amihyia's voice and perspectives about his life and regime, these cynical European views would continue to cast him in a negative light.

The Nzulezo Arrival

As earlier intimated, the Nzulezo ancestors arrived in Appolonia during *bɛlɛmgbunli* Amihyia Kpanyinli's reign.[243] Henry Meredith writes,

> The original inhabitants of this village (i.e., the Nzulezo village) are said to have been composed of disaffected and ill-disposed persons, who emigrated from their native country Chamah (Shama), a small state some distance eastward of Apollonia, and where the Dutch have a fort. It is reported, the king (Amihere Kpanyinli) at first refused them any indulgence, and desired them to depart from his kingdom: they however entreated him with much impunity, and informed him, they were willing to undergo the meanest office, if he would permit them to settle in any part of his country. At length, the king allotted to them a small spot of ground (land) adjoining to the lake (i.e., the Amanzule River), but told them they must not build upon it (the land), but endeavor to erect houses in the lake, so as to be secluded from his subjects.[244]

Meredith's use of the indirect clause, "it is reported," and indirect verb phrase, "are said

[243] Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa; with a Brief History of the African Company*, 53.
[244] Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa; with a Brief History of the African Company*, 53-54. Valsecchi and Ackah affirm Meredith's supposition. (Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 48; Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 12.)

to have been composed of," suggests that he was not a firsthand observer of the Nzulezo ancestors' encounter with *bɛlɛmgbunli* Amihyia. Meredith must have obtained this piece of information from a contemporaneous informant from Appolonia, whose identity remains unknown.

Why did Amihyia Kpanyinli want the Nzulezo migrants secluded from the general Appolonian populace? The historical records offer no answers. However, we can infer that the people's "disaffected" and "ill-disposed" outlooks might have been a factor. The Nzulezo people's estranged temperament—as Meredith depicts them—might have developed from their long and harsh migratory experiences, which were primarily characterized by incessant wars and the need for survival and refuge. The people's desire for refuge also helps explain their grave yearning for an Appolonian "citizenship," which they expressed in their assuring King Amihyia of their "willing(ness) to undergo the meanest office" in exchange for a home in Appolonia.[245] For these reasons, therefore, King Amihyia must have cultivated some suspicion of the Nzulezo ancestors, and hence, decided to have them live secluded from the Appolonian populace.

Interestingly, Nzulezo traditions make no reference to Meredith's supposition or the afore-articulated hypothesis. Instead, the people of Nzulezo offer a contrasting narrative that completely overlooks the role of King Amihyia in their admission to Appolonia. According to the Nzulezo people, their ancestors' decision to settle in Appolonia developed from the need for refuge and their unmitigated adherence Evu's directives.[246] The people fled their previous Gold Coast territories because an enemy group wanted them dead.[247] Significantly, their snail deity,

[245] Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa; with a Brief History of the African Company*, 54.
[246] Nana Tatrika VII (Nzulezo chief), John Ackah (the official Nzulezo oral historian), Egya Emoah (a Nzulezo elder), Safohyenle Kwame, and Agya Kulu (a Nzulezo elder) in multiple interviews with the author in Nzulezo and Ahumasuazo (also known as Nzulezo Number Two), during the summers of 2018, 2021, 2022.
[247] Ibid.

Evu, led their ancestors to Appolonia and instructed them to settle on the Amanzule River.[248] Opoku-Agyemang uncritically expands this narrative, stating that following the people's emigration from the town of Shama (or Sen), the Nzulezo ancestors came to Appolonia where they

> lived in peace with the people of Sen (Appolonia misconstrued as Sen), who gave us (i.e., Nzulezo people) the land from the Ankobra River to this lake (i.e., the Amanzule River) to settle and to farm… Our attackers found us here, there were many losses – some carried away, others wasted away. We moved toward the edge of the land we were given by the people of Sen (Appolonia), where we have our farms today. We did not do much with the water except use it for drinking and other chores… And, believe it or not, just as our lives were beginning to see a pattern, the snail (Evu) began to move. The seers told us the attackers were on their way, once again. Moga's (the then leader of the Nzulezo people) advice was that we should begin to build our houses in the river. [And this was how the Nzulezo ancestors settled in the middle of the Amanzule River].[249]

The above tradition reveals critical gaps and contradictions in Nzulezo and Appolonian history. On the one hand, Opoku-Agyemang's 2008 Nzulezo research collaborators suggest that Moga (the then Nzulezo leader) persuaded the Nzulezo migrant community to live in the middle of the Amanzule River.[250] On the other hand, some research collaborators I interviewed in 2017 through 2022—notably, John Ackah, the Nzulezo oral historian, Joshua Ezoa, a Nzulezo linguist, and a few elders of the Nzulezo community—explicate that Evu instructed the Nzulezo ancestors

[248] Ibid.
[249] Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang, *Where There Is No Silence: Articulations of Resistance to Enslavement* (Accra, Ghana: Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2008), 43-44.
[250] Ibid.

to settle on the Amanzule River.[251] This contradiction, as characterized by several oral historical data, undermines the Nzulezo tradition surrounding their ancestral arrival in Appolonia and settling on the Amanzule River.

Furthermore, the notion that a pursuing enemy forced Moga and his people to construct their settlement in the Amanzule River seems historically impractical. It is worth noting that the Nzulezo ancestors entered Appolonia at a time (probably the late 1750s or the 1760s) when the kingdom's economy and political position was consolidating, if not already stabilized.[252] Appolonia had successfully invaded Mea Takyi's Edwira Kingdom in 1761—Edwira was a relatively smaller Nzema polity, which lay northeast of Appolonia—and had also consecutively defeated the Dutch and their coalition army in multiple wars from 1762 to 1764.[253] Besides its 1715 and 1721 Asante conquests, Appolonia did not experience any major external military invasions in the eighteenth century that disoriented its settlement pattern or forced Appolonian communities to relocate to different areas.[254] Although there existed relatively minor assaults

[251] John Ackah, Josuah Ezoa, Safohyenle Kwame, Agya Kulu, and Agya Kwaku Pra in multiple interviews with the author in Nzulezo, Beyin, and Ahumasuazo, the summers of 2017, 2018, 2022.
[252] Historians Pierluigi Valsecchi and Pim van de Assum discuss the Appolonian political and economic growth. See Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 59-92; Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764," 5-6.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Besides the 1715 and 1721 Asante conquests of Appolonia, the scholarship on Appolonia makes no reference to any major military occupation of the kingdom in the eighteenth century. However, in 1835 and 1848, the British embarked on punitive expeditions to Appolonia, which the 1848 one toppled the then *bɛlɛmgbunli* Kaku Aka's government and subsequently set the stage for a four-year civil war in Appolonia (c. 1869–1873). I discuss the civil war in chapters four and five. For readings on the Asante invasion, see John K. Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours, 1700-1807* (London: UK: Longman, 1971), 40. For readings on the British expeditions, see Brodie Cruickshank, "Gold Coast Dispatches from Governor to Secretary of State," 24 May 1848. ADM 1/2/4, "Reports," Ghana National Archives (also called and hereafter referenced as the Public Records and Archives Administration Department [PRAAD]), Accra, Ghana; Brodie Cruickshank, "Account of the expedition to Appolonia, 1848," 1848. GB 102 MS 173088/01, "Gold Coast Papers," School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) Archives, University of London, London, U.K.; "Tonneboyër to Lans," Jan. 20, 1835, p. 45. Furley Collection, N27, 1834–1849, English Correspondence, "Heritage Materials," University of Ghana Digital Collections (UGSpace), University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, Ghana.The following authors have also discussed the British invasions of Appolonia. Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 123-135; Annor Adjaye, *Nzima Land; with Forword by G. A. Sagoe* (London: UK: Headley, 1932), 18-23; J. J. Crooks, *Records Relating to the Gold Coast Settlements from 1750 to 1874* (London, UK: Cass Publishers, 1973), 312-314; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 23; Pierluigi

primarily in the form of panyarring and small-scale confrontations between Appolonia and its neighbors, notably the peoples of Axim, Edwira, and Wassa, these attacks could not result in mass dislodgment of human settlement in eighteenth-century Appolonia.[255] Therefore, it is historically inaccurate that by the mid-eighteenth century, an enemy group penetrated the Appolonian defenses to specifically pursue the Nzulezo ancestors, forcing the people to construct their settlement in the middle of the river. This criticism undermines the above Nzulezo tradition, rendering it historically impractical and, therefore, fictitious.

Finally, the supposition that Appolonians "gave us (the Nzulezo ancestors) the land from the Ankobra River to this lake (i.e., the Amanzule River) to settle and to farm" is questionable. The distance between the Ankobra and Amanzule Rivers is about 44 kilometers (27 miles).[256] Presently, more than fifteen towns, including Sanwoma, Asanta, and Essiama, occupy this space, which is approximately 243 square miles.[257] It is far-fetched that *bɛlɛmgbunli* Amihyia would give this vast territory to the Nzulezo ancestors, not only because of its gigantic size but also for security reasons. Because Amihyia's ardent foes, notably the Dutch and Axim people, lived less than five kilometers east of the Ankobra River, the river and its adjoining towns on the Appolonian side, particularly Sanwoma and Atababo, became important security zones that needed robust military presence and protection.[258]

Scholars like Albert van Dantzig, P. Valsecchi, and P. Assum have demonstrated the relationship of the Ankobra River to political power and economic wealth. Whoever controlled

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Valsecchi, "Free People, Slaves and Pawns in the Western Gold Coast: The Demography of Dependency in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century British Archival Source," *Ghana Studies* 17, no. 1 (2014): 225–26.

[255] Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764," 5-32.

[256] I used Google Maps to measure the area between the Ankobra and Amanzule Rivers. Readers should consider the provided area size as an estimate, not a definitive measurement.

[257] My knowledge of the towns between the Ankobra and Amanzule Rivers comes from experience conducting research in this area.

[258] Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764," 20-32.

the movements of humans and merchandise around and across the Ankobra River dictated the political order in the Ankobra River basin and enjoyed significant wealth.[259] This explains why toll stations were constructed on the banks of the Ankobra River throughout the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries to regulate the flows of people and goods.[260] Considering this historical situation, it would have been strategically reckless for Amihyia to settle the itinerant Nzulezo group near the Ankobra River. That decision would have undermined Appolonia's economic position and rendered the kingdom's easterly border porous and security-compromised. It is, therefore, unimaginable that *bɛlɛmgbunli* Amihyia would allot the lands between the Ankobra and the Amanzule Rivers to the Nzulezo ancestors.

The above misgivings challenge the oral traditions about the Nzulezo's ancestral arrival in Appolonia and inadvertently cast Henry Meredith's theory as the more plausible historical reality. According to Meredith, the Nzulezo ancestors entered Appolonia as a disaffected and ill-disposed group who begged King Amihyia for a place in Appolonia. Amihyia hesitantly considered the people's request, initially granting them the land adjoining the Amanzule River. Pierluigi Valsecchi has suggested that this land might be the present-day Ahumasuazo township (also known as Nzulezo Number Two), which is situated on the northeastern bank of the Amanzule River.[261] For their disaffected disposition, Amihyia might have preferred the Nzulezo newcomers to live remotely from his people, thereby circumscribing them to the Amanzule River.

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[259] Van Dantzig, "The Ankobra Gold Interest," 169; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 42; Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764," 3, 6.
[260] Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764," 3, 6. Michel R Doortmont, Pierluigi Valsecchi, and James R Anquandah, *The Ankobra Gold Route: Studies in the Historical Relationship between Western Ghana and the Dutch* (Accra: GH: The Ankobra Gold Route Project, 2014), 16.
[261] Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 45. Ahumasuazo or Nzulezo Number Two is the territory north of the Amanzule River and serves as a second home to the Nzulezo people. During my fieldwork in Nzulezo and Appolonia, I observed that a significant number of Nzulezo people live in Ahumasuazo and have their farmlands there.

Why Settle in Appolonia?: Contextualizing Nzulezo People's Choice

Indeed, the people of Nzulezo emphasize the quest for security and spirituality (Evu's demands) as the fundamental reasons for settling in Appolonia. However, these reasons did not necessarily guarantee the people's admittance into the Appolonian Kingdom. After all, those motivations only benefited the newcomers and not the Appolonians. It is, therefore, crucial to understand the motivations and interests of the Appolonian people in receiving the Nzulezo migrants. Three main conditions in Appolonia help to explain this phenomenon—(1) the open border policy practiced by Appolonian kings, (2) the *amonle* covenant, a socio-cultural system that shaped social relations and guaranteed immigrants' safety within Appolonia, and (3) the Appolonian environment, especially its water systems and bodies of water. The latter two conditions encouraged the Nzulezo ancestors to permanently remain in the Appolonian Kingdom.

Appolonia's Open Border Policy

The opening of territorial borders to new migrants was not a novel phenomenon in pre-colonial African societies, particularly pre-colonial Gold Coast polities. The Sehwi and Asante, for example, practiced an open border policy as far back as the pre-1500 era, which helped in the growth of these kingdoms.[262] Such growth was reflected mainly in the host society's demographic expansion and labor supply. Historians Ivor Wilks, Emmanuel Akyeampong, and Pashington Obeng explain that in the case of the Asante, the influx of different ethnicities, especially from the northerly West African savannah region, into the fifteenth- and sixteenth-

[262] K. Y. Daaku, *Oral Traditions of Sefwi*, vol. 1 (Accra, GH: Institute of bAfrican Studies, University of Ghana, 1974), 1; Ivor Wilks, "Land, Labour, Capital and the Forest Kingdom of Asante: A Model of Early Change," in *The Evolution of Social Systems*, ed. J. Friedman and M. J. Rowlands (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978), 497; Emmanuel Akyeampong and Pashington Obeng, "Spirituality, Gender, and Power in Asante History," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 28, no. 3 (1995): 489–90. The Asante proverb, *obi nkyerɛ obi ase* ("no one should trace the origins of other people [specifically, non-Asante/unfree folks]) emphasizes the receptiveness and assimilative nature of the pre-colonial Asante society.

century Asante society significantly increased the host nation's population, allowing its members to rely on the newcomers' labor for cultivating the untamed Adanse forest lands.[263] These scholars argue that the pre-colonial Asante's open border policy immensely contributed to the society's evolution throughout the seventeenth to the nineteenth century.

Similarly, Appolonia practiced an open border policy, which formed the foundation of the kingdom's demographic expansion.[264] Beginning from the reign of Anɔ Bile, the supposed founder of Appolonia, Appolonian leaders intentionally welcomed diverse migrant populations from the Gold Coast and its inland societies, including Asante and Akwamu.[265] Jan Huydecoper wrote in 1763 that Amihyia's "village had become a hideout for all those who had committed crimes or had outstanding debts."[266] The Appolonian open border policy made it possible for *bɛlɛmgbunli* Amihyia and his subjects to receive several migrant populations, including the Nzulezo ancestors.

The peoples of Kikam, Esiama, Nkroful, and Ampain, constituted some of the migrant groups who came to Amihyia's Appolonia.[267] J. Y. Ackah explicates that the Ampain people, who are believed to be of Ehotile origin, came to Appolonia from the Ebrie and Tano River area in present-day southeastern Ivory Coast.[268] The people of Ampain arrived in Appolonia at the time (1761) when Amihyia was fighting King Mea Tekyi of Edwira.[269] The people of Kikam

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[263] Ivor Wilks, "Land, Labour, Capital and the Forest Kingdom of Asante: A Model of Early Change," in *The Evolution of Social Systems*, ed. J. Friedman and M. J. Rowlands (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978), 497; Emmanuel Akyeampong and Pashington Obeng, "Spirituality, Gender, and Power in Asante History," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 28, no. 3 (1995): 489–90.
[264] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 8-13; Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764," 8; Alibah, "A History of the Nzema from the Pre-Colonial to the Colonial Era," 9-14.
[265] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," Appendix 6; Alibah, "A History of the Nzema from the Pre-Colonial to the Colonial Era," 16.
[266] Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764," 8.
[267] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 11-12.
[268] Ibid, 11.
[269] Ibid. For further reading on Amihyia Kpanyinli and Mea Tekyi's war, see Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764,"10-12.

also are believed to have emigrated from Takyiman (in the Bono country) to Appolonia during a time of war.[270] From Takyiman, the Kikam people moved to Kumasi, the Asante capital, and then Asuawa in Edwira before settling in Amihyia's Appolonia.[271]

For the people of Nzulezo, as described in the preceding chapter, their ancestors journeyed from the Middle Niger to Appolonia, sojourning in different Gold Coast locales, including Mankessim, Shama, and Ahanta.[272] Indeed, the Nzulezo people's quest for refuge and adherence to Evu's demands shaped their choice of Appolonia; however, the Appolonian open border policy allowed *bɛlɛmgbunli* Amihyia to receive them into his kingdom. One could argue, therefore, that Appolonia's open border policy served as an independent and fundamental condition, which made it possible for the Nzulezo people to achieve their objective of finding shelter in Appolonia.

Socio-Cultural Factor: The *Amonle* Covenant

How did the Appolonian kings effectively manage and integrate the migrant groups into the Appolonian society? Historian J. Y. Ackah argues that pre-colonial Appolonian leaders used the *amonle* covenant, an olden socio-religious custom, to define social relations between the newcomers and their host population and to assimilate the former into the Appolonian society.[273] *Amonle* is a popular Nzema word that translates to curse, oath, or ordeal test.[274] According to Ackah, the *amonle* ritual functioned as both a curse and a blood covenant that helped to ensure

[270] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 10.
[271] Ibid, 10-11.
[272] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 12; Opoku-Agyemang, *Where There Is No Silence*, 41-42.
[273] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 13.
[274] *Amonle* is often interchangeably used with *ndane*, another Nzema word, to refer to a charm or amulet. For readings on *amonle*, see P. A. Kwesi Aboagye, *Nzema-English, English-Nzema Dictionary* (Accra, GH: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1968), 24; Vinigi L Grottanelli, *The Python Killer: Stories of Nzema Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 201; Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 13-15.
Python Killer: Stories of Nzema Life (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 201.

order within the society.[275] It also bestowed upon the new migrants the right to Appolonian lands or water-space, as in the case of Nzulezo people.[276] None of the Appolonian newcomers settled without the permission of the king and that permission was only granted through and after the performance of the *amonle* ritual or covenant.[277] Ackah explains that after the newcomers had met the king and expressed their intention to settle in Appolonia,

> the newcomers had to leave their leader in the capital while they (or some of them) went to seek a suitable land (in the Appolonian territory) on which to settle. On finding some, they would then return to the capital where a member of the king's lineage and another of the leader of the newcomers were beheaded. Their dripping blood was collected in either a brass pan or a calabash or a pot and mixed with specially pounded herbs which were eaten first by the king and the leader of the new group and then by representatives of both sides. Part of the mixture was carefully wrapped in cloth and tied to a stone which was then thrown into the Amanzule River [a symbolic act signifying the invocation and involvement of an Appolonian river deity]. This [ritual] was called amonle, which literally meant a curse, but in this context, an irrevocable bond, the violation of which by either of the contracting parties constituted a serious offence for it would not only draw upon the offender the anger of the gods and the ancestors of both sides but would also entitle the injured either to seek redress or to repudiate the amonle.[278]

The *amonle* covenant neatly fits into historian George Brooks' idea of "Landlords and

[275] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 13.
[276] Ibid, 13-14
[277] Ibid.
[278] Ibid, 13.

Strangers agreement," which he defines as "a western African custom and practice that promoted the safety of migrants, traders, and travelers and the security of their possessions in return for acknowledgement of their obligations to groups with prior rights to arable soils, pasturelands, and fishing grounds."[279] In Appolonia, the *amonle* required the newcomers to recognize the king of Appolonia as their overlord and offer him and the kingdom their unflinching loyalty and support, especially during times of war.[280] They were also expected to provide the king with gifts in the form of gold and farm produce.[281] In return, the king was to offer the newcomers a suitable place of settlement, as well as protection from external attacks.[282] Additionally, the *amonle* discouraged the king from killing any member of the migrant group, except in cases of murder offenses.[283] These conditions helped to promote cordial relations between new migrants (i.e., strangers) and Appolonian subjects (landlords) and ensured the safety of the migrant group within the kingdom.[284]

To Appolonians, the *amonle* served as a socio-cultural "currency" with which they obtained unwavering fealty from newcomers. The newcomers, on the other hand, might have construed the *amonle* as a religious and political instrument that guaranteed their safety and residency in Appolonia. For as long as Appolonian leaders held their end of the covenant, which they did to a considerable extent, the Kingdom of Appolonia promised to be a sanctuary for Gold Coast migrant groups. The *amonle* covenant, therefore, might have appealed to the Nzulezo forebears, who were, by then, in need of refuge. For this "promised" refuge, it is unsurprising

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[279] George Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers: Ecology, Society, and Trade in Western Africa, 1000-1630* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 1.
[280] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 13.
[281] Ibid, 13-14.
[282] Ibid.
[283] The amonle covenant had a condition that stipulated that *ye dadeɛ ɛnnga me anzɛnye me dehele* (the king's knife would neither touch me [i.e., the leader of the newcomers] nor my relatives). This condition ensured the protection of the newcomers within the Appolonian Kingdom. See Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 14.
[284] Ibid.

that the people chose to make Appolonia their final migratory destination.

The Environmental Factor: Appolonia's *Waterscape*

Scholars of Appolonia, notably Pierluigi Valsecchi, Martha Alibah, and J. Y. Ackah, have unanimously classified the Appolonian country into two main ecological zones: the *mowulenu* (or beach/coastal zone) and the *azulenluanu* (bush or forest zone).[285] Indeed, the settlement layout of Appolonia reflects this classification. More than twenty towns are strewn across the Appolonian coast (*mowulenu*) while many more lay in the *azulenluanu* (forest zone).[286] The *mowulenu* could be considered as a more historically important zone relative to the *azulenluanu* because of its influential position in Appolonia's past. Historically, the *mowulenu* (coastal zone) has served as the principal area where Appolonia's eighteenth- and nineteenth-century trade and politics took place.[287] For example, Appolonia's seats of government have been stationed in the coastal towns of Beyin and Atuabo since the founding of the kingdom.[288] Additionally, Europeans commercial and political engagements with Appolonians throughout the eighteenth century and the better half of the nineteenth century were predominantly circumscribed to the *mowulenu* (coastal zone).[289] Valsecchi maintains that "it was only from 1857 that the British acquired some awareness of the demographic relevance [i.e., the relatively larger population and land size] of the towns in the interior of Appolonia (i.e., the *azulenluanu*), and only out of the need to extend the levy taxes."[290] These reasons explain why the historiography of Appolonia is disproportionately centered on the *mowulenu* (Appolonian coast)

[285] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 3; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 163; Alibah, "A History of the Nzema from the Pre-Colonial to the Colonial Era," 8.
[286] I learned about the Appolonian settlement pattern during my field research in the region.
[287] Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 53, 60.
[288] The following scholarships demonstrate this fact. Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema"; Sanderson, "The History of Nzima up to 1874"; Valsecchi, "Free People, Slaves and Pawns in the Western Gold Coast"; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*; Alibah, *The European Presence in Nzemaland (1550-1957)*.
[289] Ibid.
[290] Valsecchi, "Free People, Slaves and Pawns in the Western Gold Coast," 236.

more than it pays attention to the *azulenluanu* (forest) region.

In addition to the literary bias against the *azulenluanu* region, the scholarship uncritically casts the *mowulenu* and *azulenluanu* zones as exclusively dichotomous ecological spaces. By implication, scholars have suggested that Appolonians either belonged to the *mowulenu* or the *azulenluanu*.[291] However, the Amanzule River, which became the habitat of the Nzulezo people, challenges this dichotomous classification. The Amanzule River neither strictly existed in the *mowulenu* nor the *azulenluanu* zones but rather straddled between them. This implies that the Nzulezo people neither strictly belonged to the *mowulenu* nor *azulenluanu* populations, albeit they were considered Appolonian subjects. The Amanzule River, together with the other bodies of water in Appolonia, including the Fia, Bia, and Ankobra Rivers, became integral parts of the Appolonian political ecology, connecting the *mowulenu* to the *azulenluanu* ecological zones, serving as places of refuge during war times, and facilitating the flows of peoples and commodities.[292] Yet, scholars have failed to view the Amanzule River and the broader Appolonian waterscape as unique ecological zones that significantly shaped the history of the kingdom.

One significant contribution of Appolonia's waterscape was their ability to draw both local and European groups to the kingdom. As earlier intimated, Appolonia was a heavily watered kingdom with the Ankobra River, the Atlantic Sea, and the Tano-Dwene-Ehy Rivers bordering the kingdom to the east, south, and west, respectively. Historian Albert van Dantzig maintains that throughout the pre-colonial era, the Ankobra River, for example, consistently

[291] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 3; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 163; Alibah, "A History of the Nzema from the Pre-Colonial to the Colonial Era," 8.
[292] Brodie Cruickshank, "The Expedition to Appolonia, 1848," 1848. MS 173088, "Gold Coast Papers." Special Collections, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) Library, London, UK; Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," Appendix 2, p. 5; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 49-50.

appealed to European groups, particularly the Portuguese and the Dutch, especially because of the river's auriferous resources and navigable course for penetrating the Gold Coast interior.[293] It must be noted that the Ankobra River was originally called *Siane* in the Nzema language.[294] It was the Portuguese who named the Siane *Rio da Cobra* (i.e., River Cobra) because of its meandering (snake-like) waterway.[295] Rio da Cobre has been differently represented in European sources as *Rio Mancu* and *Rio Ancober* and later *Ankobra*.[296]

As far back as 1573, Menda Motta, a Portuguese merchant, sailed up the Ankobra River to the inland Gold Coast kingdoms of Wassa and Sehwi with the hope of getting "full control of the gold trade."[297] Motta's exploration yielded future constructions of five European factories and fortresses, including Fort Ruychaver and Fort Elize Carthago, along the mouth and banks of the Ankobra River.[298] When Jean Barbot, a French commercial agent, came to the Gold Coast in the late seventeenth century, he wrote about the Ankobra River as being "broad, long in length, and full of waterfalls and rocks, which make it none navigable."[299] Barbot's featuring of the Siane in his account of the broader Guinea Coast illustrates the relevance of the river to Europeans and their commercial enterprise on the Gold Coast. More so, in the 1870s, another Frenchman, Bonnat, utilized the Ankobra watercourse to penetrate the auriferous inland Gold Coast kingdoms, establishing himself as the "first European to start successful modern mining operations in concession along its (the Siane's) banks."[300] These examples illuminate the

[293] Albert Van Dantzig, "The Ankobra Gold Interest," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 14, no. 2 (1973), 169.
[294] Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 10, 13.
[295] Ibid, 42-43, 229.
[296] Ray A. Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Polities in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 24-26; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 42, 44, 47, 229.
[297] Van Dantzig, "The Ankobra Gold Interest," 169; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 42.
[298] Ibid.
[299] Jean Barbot, *Barbot on Guinea: The Writings of Jean Barbot on West Africa 1678-1712* (Hakluyt Society, 1992), 338.
[300] Van Dantzig, "The Ankobra Gold Interest," 169.

different ways that Appolonia's water bodies, particularly the Siane, attracted Europeans to the kingdom.

For local migrant groups like the Nzulezo and Eikwe people who settled in Appolonia, their interests in Appolonia's waterscape went beyond the Ankobra River and its auriferous or navigable qualities. Appolonia's waterscape offered many benefits, including ready access to fresh water and its edible and non-edible resources, as well as a sense of security. Because of Appolonia's water-protected western, eastern, and southern borders, prospective immigrants of Appolonia, particularly the Nzulezo people, must have perceived the Appolonian Kingdom to be a well-insulated territory, which was predominantly the case, especially throughout the second half of the eighteenth century and the first three decades of the nineteenth century. During this period, Appolonia remained unscathed by any external attacks, although the kingdom suffered major defeats in 1715 and 1721 at the hands of the Asante and, in 1835 and 1848, by the British.[301] The Asante penetrated the Appolonian Kingdom through its non-water protected northern border while the British crossed the Ankobra River (eastern border) with about 4,500 local troops.[302] Beyond these defeats, the people of Appolonia enjoyed considerable peace and refuge from external invasions partially because the water-protected boundaries mitigated many of such attacks.

For instance, historian Pim van den Assum explains that during the Appolonian-Dutch Wars, which commenced in March 1762, the annual rainy season caused the water levels and tides of the Ankobra River and several rivulets in Appolonia to increase, making it extremely

[301] Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours, 1700-1807*, 40; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 23; Pierluigi Valsecchi, "Free People, Slaves and Pawns in the Western Gold Coast," 225–26; Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 123-135; J. J. Crooks, *Records Relating to the Gold Coast Settlements from 1750 to 1874*, 312-314; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 23.
[302] Ibid.

challenging for the Dutch coalition forces to effectively penetrate the Appolonian eastern defenses.[303] Assum writes, "by the time the latter (i.e., Mea Takyi, king of Edwira) had arrived with word that they had encountered little resistance, it was too late for Huydecoper's coalition (army) to cross the (Ankobra) river probably due to the tides."[304] Henry Meredith adds that

> the Dutch crossed Ancobra River, which forms the eastern boundary of Appolonia, with a considerable force. Europeans as well as natives, with a few artillery; were soon opposed by the Appolonians, at the head of whom was the king. A battle was fought, which terminated with the defeat of the invaders, who were obliged to re-cross the river with precipitation, leaving behind them their field-pieces.[305]

While the Ankobra River hindered external invasions from the east, the Tano, Dwene, and Ehy Rivers, which protected Appolonia's western border, continued to intimidate potential attackers, who possibly could have been the Anyi people or the French.[306] The Tano-Dwene-Ehy River basin was gigantic in size and depth than the Ankobra, proving more challenging to cross—see image of these rivers in Figure 9 below.[307] In the second half of the nineteenth century, during the Appolonian civil war (c. 1869–1873), King Amakyi, the leader of one of the warring faction, suffered one of the most tremendous casualties in Appolonia's history when he and his men attempted to take refuge in Krinjabo, an Anyi society that lay west of the Tano-Dwene-Ehy River basin.[308] The then King of Krinjabo misconstrued King Amakyi's crossing of

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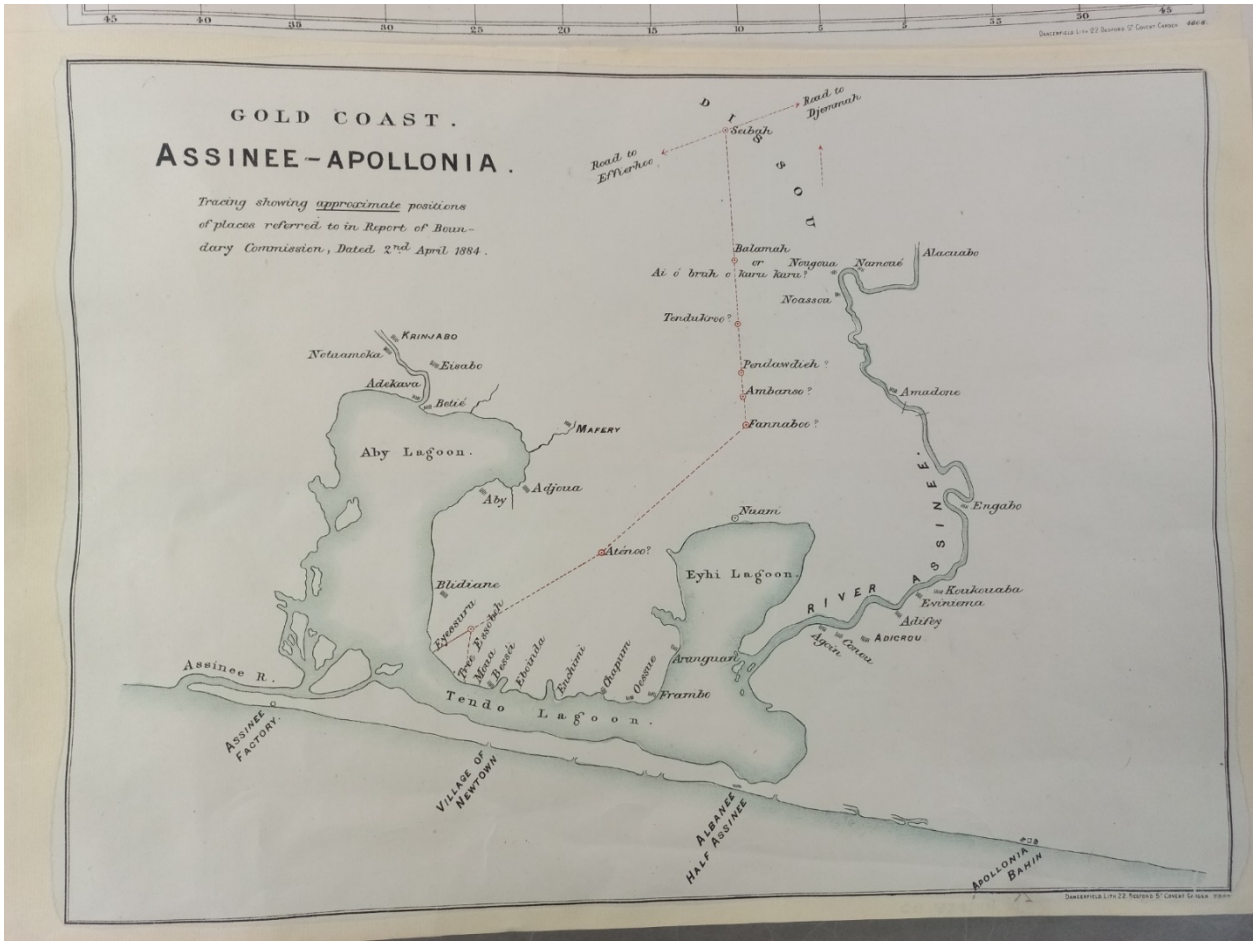
[303] Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764," 19-20.
[304] Ibid, 20. Assum cited his evidence from Huydecoper's (the Dutch commander in Axim) letter to D. G. Erasmi, the then Director-General of the Dutch West India Company, which was headquartered in Elmina. [Letter Cmd. Huydecoper to D.G. Erasmi, January 30, 1763. NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv.nr. 964, "Axim Correspondence," Folio: 8F].
[305] Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa; with a Brief History of the African Company*, 128.
[306] Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 23.
[307] Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 55-56.
[308] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 168.

the river basin as an act of war and ordered his soldiers to kill the perceived Appolonian enemies while they crossed the river.[309] J. Y. Ackah maintains that only one Appolonian survived the Anyi assault.[310] In this instance, the Tano-Dwene-Ehy River basin rendered King Amakyi and his people vulnerable to the Anyi army. The river favored the Anyi people who lived on its western side.

The above examples demonstrate the crucial position of the Ankobra and the Tano-Dwene-Ehy River basin in Appolonia's security system. These rivers offered extra layers of insulation to Appolonia by hindering external invasions. In King Amakyi's situation, however, the Tano-Dwene-Ehy River basin worked against Appolonians. The protective nature of Appolonia's waterscape might have portrayed the kingdom as a relatively well-protected territory. This quality might have appealed to several migrant groups, notably the Nzulezo ancestors, and encouraged them to permanently reside in the kingdom. In addition to their protective function, Appolonia's waterscape provided ready access to fresh water and water resources. Nzulezo people explain that their ancestors considered the Amanzule River to be an excellent source of fresh water and water food like fish, crabs, and crocodiles.[311] This consideration motivated the Nzulezo forebears to live on the Amanzule River, according to John Ackah, the Nzulezo oral historian.[312] *Bɛlɛmgbunli* Amihyia may have circumscribed the Nzulezo ancestors to a watery ecological space, but the people also perceived great opportunities in that environment. Pierluigi Valsecchi notes that throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Amanzule River became a major source of tilapia and other aquatic foods to the Appolonian

[309] Ibid.
[310] Ibid.
[311] John Arthur (Nzulezo oral historian) in an interview with the author, July 2018, in Nzulezo.
[312] Ibid.

Figure 9: Tano-Dwene-Ehy River Basin



Copyright: a late nineteenth-century map of the Appolonian western border showing the Tano-Dwene-Ehy river basin. The image was obtained from the British National Archives, London, United Kingdom.

Kingdom.[313] In this economic role, the Nzulezo people acted as the principal agents (fishermen) supplying these water resources and helping to bolster the kingdom's political economy.[314] One could argue, therefore, that the Amanzule River's supply of fresh water and (non-)edible resources was likely a significant factor that encouraged the Nzulezo ancestors to make Appolonia their permanent home.

[313] Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 49.
[314] Ibid; John Arthur (Nzulezo oral historian) in an interview with the author, July 2018, in Nzulezo.

Conclusion

This chapter highlights three main arguments about the Nzulezo people's arrival and settling in Appolonia. First, the people of Nzulezo arrived in Appolonia during the reign of *bɛlɛmgbunli* Amihyia Kpanyinli, who reigned from 1758 to 1779.[315] In the absence of a precise date, it might be safe to speculate that the Nzulezo ancestors came to Appolonia during the early years of Amihyia's regime, probably in the late 1750s or the early 1760s. Second, the people's eagerness to fulfill evu's demands and their critical need for security from the political turmoil of the eighteenth-century Gold Coast led them to Appolonia. However, the Nzulezo ancestors' reasons for coming to Appolonia did not necessarily translate to Appolonians accepting them.

The third argument: through their open border policy and their practice of *amonle*, Appolonians demonstrated an inclination to receive and assimilate newcomers. Therefore, these conditions (the open border policy and *amonle*) encouraged Appolonians to admit Gold Coast migrant groups, particularly the Nzulezo ancestors. Appolonia's waterscape, notably the Amanzule River and the water-protected boundaries, also served as significant attractions to the Nzulezo ancestors. The Nzulezo ancestors considered the Amanzule River a great source of fresh water and food like fish and crabs; and hence, deemed it fit to dwell in the middle of the river despite *bɛlɛmgbunli* Amihyia's goal to separate them from the general Appolonian populace.

After settling in Appolonia, how did the Nzulezo people's life and history evolve? The subsequent chapters address this question. However, historicizing the people's life and history in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Appolonia in isolation from macro-historical phenomena of that time, notably the Atlantic slave trade, renders the discussion incomplete. Therefore, chapter three delves into Appolonia's relationship with slavery and the Atlantic slave trade,

[315] Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 21, 215.

demonstrating the kingdom's position in the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Gold Coast and Atlantic political economy and how that shaped Nzulezo people's history.

CHAPTER THREE:

A Gold Coast Slave-Trade Outlier: Appolonia in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade

In his review of one of the seminal historical monographs on Appolonia, historian David Henige calls Appolonia ". . . certainly less important, historically, if not necessarily less interesting, than the Fante area along (the Gold Coast)."[316] Henige's assertion is problematic. To describe Appolonia as historically less important raises critical questions about the perspective from which Henige approaches Appolonia's history and the sources he draws on to make such a bold claim. It appears that Henige did not take the time to examine the diverse historical sources on Appolonia that reveal a rich Appolonian past. This chapter discusses some slave trade export data and European archival sources on Appolonia that show the kingdom's historical position in slave trading on the Gold Coast during the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. These sources reveal that Appolonia was the only kingdom on the Gold Coast that did not trade many enslaved people because of two interrelated factors.

First, conditions (like the prevalence of violence and European settlements and fortresses) that enabled the growth of the Atlantic slave trade in several Gold Coast port towns did little to enhance the slave trade in Appolonia. These conditions did not thrive partly because of specific political measures that Appolonian leaders put in place—for example, policies that discouraged the creation of European settlements and Appolonian leaders' disengagement from territorial-expansion programs, especially hegemonic wars, that could have helped produce lots of enslaved people for sale. Second, the *amonle* ritual, the Appolonian socio-cultural custom discussed in

[316] The southern coastline of Ghana was formerly called the Gold Coast. This name was given by Europeans who considered the region auriferous. I choose to use Gold Coast in place of Ghana to offer a better representation of historical facts. David Henige, *Review of Power and State Formation in West Africa: Appolonia from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, by Pierluigi Valsecchi, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 45, no. 3 (2012): 468–70.

chapter two, helped to mitigate the slave trade. This ritual, together with the conditions mentioned above, helped to reduce slave trading and exports in Appolonia, making the kingdom an outlier in the Gold Coast slave trade geography.[317]

Evidence of the above claim reflects in multiple historical sources, including European travelers' accounts and the English Company of Merchants Trading to Africa's ledgers on their forts on the Gold Coast. Before analyzing these historical data, however, it is essential to understand the indigenous systems of social servitude in precolonial Gold Coast and how that shaped slave trading in Appolonia.

Slavery and Social Servitude in Pre-Colonial Gold Coast

Akosua Perbi, the senior historian of slavery in Ghana, has established that slavery existed on the Gold Coast well before the coming of Europeans to the region in the late fifteenth century. Perbi explains that "in pre-colonial Ghana, a slave was a person who had been bought in cash or in kind or acquired through various means by an individual or a group of people."[318] She further differentiates a "slave" from a "servant," explaining that an enslaved person was "in a state of servitude guarded by rights" while a servant, also in service to other individual(s), had rights but was not obtained through cash, kind, forced capture, as was the slave.[319] Individuals rather came to servanthood by volition, mostly to settle debt with their service.[320] Perbi's definitions reveal some complexities associated with *slavery* and *social servitude* on the Gold

[317] I classify Appolonia as a slave trade frontier to depict the region's outlier position in the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Gold Coast slave trade economy. The kingdom was almost invisible in the slave trade economy of the Gold Coast because of its minimal involvement in the trade. Appolonia was also the westerly border territory of the Gold Coast, and this allows us to consider the kingdom a frontier territory in geospatial terms. Thus, the "frontier" descriptor applies to Appolonia on two grounds: as a border territory and an outlier in the Gold Coast slave trade geography.
[318] Akosua Adoma Perbi, *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana from the 15th to the 19th Century*, (Legon, Accra, Ghana: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2004), 5.
[319] Ibid, 130.
[320] Ibid.

Coast.

The term *servant* covered a spectrum of modes of subjection. It was a generic epithet that described one's subordinate social position to another who occupied a superordinate station. For instance, the term was used to describe a relationship between two chiefs—one superior and the other subordinate. The superior chief would refer to the subordinate one as a servant because it was expected of the sub-chief to "serve" the superior chief.[321] Slaves, on the other hand, were individuals acquired through either trade, gift-giving, or other means, and their social identity positioned them at the lowest echelon of society's class structures.[322] The pre-colonial Akan naming system reveals the distinctions between slaves and servants on the Gold Coast.

Among the Akan of southern Ghana, different names existed for varied categories of servitude. There was the *akoa,* which meant a servant (as in maidservant or bondservant).[323] There also existed *donko*, which translated to slave.[324] *Dummum* represented war captives; *awowa* meant a pawn; and *akyere* corresponded to a criminal-under-punishment.[325] In practical terms, a household could have a maidservant (i.e., an *akoa*) and a *donko* (a slave) who may perform similar or the same functions, but their social identities differentiated and placed them in different statuses within the society. The same applied to *awowa* and the other forms of servitude. Because these social classifications were fluid, it was not uncommon for one to move

[321] Ibid, 147-8; John K. Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours, 1700-1807* (London: UK: Longman, 1971), 24-5.
[322] Ibid, 130, Trevor R. Getz, *Abina and the Important Men: A Graphic History*, 2 edition (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 126; Ivor Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century: The Structure and Evolution of a Political Order*, (London ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 176-77; A. Norman Klein, "The Two Asantes: Competing Interpretations of 'Slavery' in Akan-Asante Culture and Society," in *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa*, ed. Paul E. Lovejoy (Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc, 1981), 155–58.
[323] Perbi, 3; Klein, "The Two Asantes," 155-56; Kwabena Adu-Boahen, "Friendly Assistance: Archetypal Pawnship in Precolonial Akan Society," *African Journal of History and Culture* 5, no. 8 (2013): 162, 164.
[324] Historians Trevor Getz, Sandra Greene, and Kwasi Konadu scrupulously complicate our understanding of *odonko* in *Abina and the Important Men*, 171-177.
[325] Perbi, *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana from the 15th to the 19th Century*, 3; Randy J. Sparks, "Gold Coast Merchant Families, Pawning, and the Eighteenth-Century British Slave Trade," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (2013): 318-19; Getz, *Abina and the Important Men*, 125.

from one category to another.[326]

There is evidence of the existence of indigenous slavery and servitude in pre-colonial Appolonia, which reflects in the Nzema language—the language of the Appolonians. The Nzema word *akɛlɛ* is used interchangeably in reference to "slave" or "servant" while *akɛlɛyɛlɛ* corresponds to servitude or slavery.[327] *Sonvolɛ* is another word for "servant."[328] J. Y. Ackah and Pierluigi Valsecchi support the notion of the existence of indigenous slavery in pre-colonial Appolonia, establishing that Appolonian kings considered their sub-chiefs as *akɛlɛ* or *sonvolɛ*.[329] One such sub-chieftain was the *gyaasehene*, leader of the *gyaase* division, a unit in the king's palace responsible for the day-to-day management of the palace.[330] Larry Yarak explains that the *gyaasefoɔ* (the *gyaase* group) were literally "people of the hearth"—i.e., unfree individuals or foreigners.[331] Perbi also notes that usually the *gyaasehene* was an unfree person.[332] In Appolonia, the *gyaasehene* was *sonvolɛ* (i.e., a servant) to the Appolonian king.[333] Under the *gyaasehene* were various sub-groups such as the stool carriers' group, drummers', horn-blowers', and umbrella bearers' group, whose leaders were themselves *sonvolɛ* or *akɛlɛ*.[334] Like their leaders, members of the sub-groups were unfree individuals who performed varying roles, including farming, foraging, and fishing. Extremely loyal members conducted trade, especially intra-state

[326] Perbi, *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana from the 15th to the 19th Century*, 74; Sparks, "Gold Coast Merchant Families, Pawning, and the Eighteenth-Century British Slave Trade," 319.
[327] P. A. Kwesi Aboagye, *Nzema-English, English-Nzema Dictionary* (Accra, GH: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1968), 21.
[328] Baba Moro in a phone interview with the author, August 2022, in Beyin.
[329] J. Y. Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema" (M.A. Thesis, Accra: GH, University of Ghana, Legon, 1965), 14-15; Pierluigi Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa: Appolonia from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 14.
[330] See Pierluigi Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 28-36; Martha Alibah, *A History of the Nzema in Pre-Colonial Ghana* (Accra: GH: Woeli Publishing Services, 2013), 18-23.
[331] Larry W. Yarak, "Slavery and the State in Asante History," in *The Cloth of Many Colored Silks: Papers on History and Society, Ghanaian and Islamic, in Honor of Ivor Wilks*, ed. J. O. Hunwick and N. Lawler (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 235.
[332] Perbi, *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana from the 15th to the 19th Century*, 94.
[333] Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 14.
[334] Ibid, 94.

trade, on behalf of the king or their respective masters.[335]

The emergence of the Atlantic slave trade on the Gold Coast sometime in the latter half of the sixteenth century brought significant transformations to the pre-colonial Gold Coast systems of slavery and servitude. One such change was that the different classifications of social servitude became lumped up into one, which was the slave (*donko* or *akɛlɛ*).[336] People became more inclined to sell their servants or pawns as slaves into the Atlantic slave trade.[337] This development led to the increase slave trading and the exportation of enslaved people out of the Gold Coast, especially from the second half of the seventeenth century.[338] By the turn of the eighteenth century, the Gold Coast had transformed into a significant transshipment center for the Atlantic slave trade, and Appolonia had been drawn into the broader West African/Atlantic political economy.[339]

While the scholarship on Appolonia establishes an active trading relationship between Appolonians and European traders, mainly the British, throughout the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, it provides minimal information regarding the kingdom's involvement in the Atlantic slave trade.[340] However, slave exportation data from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

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[335] Ibid, 78. Valsecchi discusses a nineteenth-century incident in the Appolonia-Axim-Wassa region where Kwadwo, a bondservant of a king, was captured (pawnyarred) on a trip to conduct business for his king. See Pierluigi Valsecchi, "How Kwadwo Regained His Freedom and Put the Slave-Traders in Big Trouble," in *African Voices on Slavery and the Slave Trade: Volume 1: The Sources*, ed. Alice Bellagamba, Martin A. Klein, and Sandra E. Greene, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 267–82, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139022552.032.
[336] Perbi, *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana from the 15th to the 19th Century*, 256, and Anatole Norman Klein, *Inequality in Asante: A Study of the Forms and Meanings of Slavery and Social Servitude in Pre- and Early Colonial Akan-Asante Society and Culture* (University of Michigan, 1981), 44-46.
[337] F Kwasi Boaten, "Trade among the Asante of Ghana up to the End of 18th Century," *Research Review* 7, no. 1 (1970), 42.
[338] Albert Van Dantzig, *Forts and Castles of Ghana* (Accra: Sedco Publishing, 1999), 21-32; K. Y. Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600-1720: A Study of the African Reaction to European Trade* (London: UK: Clarendon, 1970), 21-47.
[339] Alibah, *The European Presence in Nzemaland (1550-1957)*, 34; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 52-54.
[340] The preceding chapter discusses some of Appolonia's trade relations with Europeans. See page 10 of Chapter two. Also see Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 59-92; Pim van den Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764: A Detailed Inquiry about How the Dutch Lost the War" (MPhil Thesis, Leiden, Netherlands, Leiden University, 2012), 6-16, 18-20, 35-40.

Database for the Gold Coast and, particularly, Appolonia, suggest that Appolonia's participation in the Atlantic slave trade was very marginal: that Appolonia was likely the only Gold Coast territory to trade the fewest enslaved people from the eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. See Table 1 below for excerpts of the data. Examining this data with other British archival sources, especially the records of the English Company of Merchants Trading to Africa, reveals that the Atlantic slave trade was probably less concentrated in Appolonia, which helps explain why the kingdom traded the fewest enslaved people on the Gold Coast.

Table 1: Distribution of Slave Exports on the Gold Coast

Year Range	Principal Place of Purchase: The Gold Coast								
	Accra	Anomabu	**Apollonia**	Axim	Cape Coast Castle	Christiansborg Castle	Elmina	Kormantine	Gold Coast, port unspecified
1501-1550	0	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	0	0
1551-1600	0	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	0	0
1601-1650	213	0	**0**	0	0	0	338	211	229
1651-1700	1,316	581	**0**	338	7,702	0	6,925	2,764	35,214
1701-1750	3,402	45,127	**0**	1,067	32,898	5,111	62,134	1,612	97,443
1751-1800	8,244	123,221	**352**	496	67,539	9,711	23,502	4,432	121,498
1801-1850	4,469	3,345	**0**	0	9,913	1,262	1,008	0	38,033
1851-1900	0	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	0	0

This table was recreated from extensive statistical data in the *Slavevoyages*: *The Slave Trade Database*. The following link (https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database#tables) provides a more detailed picture of the slave export figures on the Gold Coast from 1501 through 1900. Readers are encouraged to pay close attention to the figures of Appolonia.

Table 1 offers numerical information about slave exportations from several Gold Coast port towns to other parts of the Atlantic world. It is worth noting that the export data does not tell a complete story about slave exportations from the Gold Coast, as the figures for the "Gold Coast, unspecified ports" suggest. Those figures reveal that several thousands of enslaved peoples taken from the Gold Coast could not be traced to a specific port town—a limitation of the data. Notwithstanding this limitation, the table demonstrates that slave exportation on the Gold Coast began to rise in the mid-seventeenth century, reaching an all-time high in the eighteenth century.[341] Historian David Eltis, however, notes that there were some steady declines in exports on the Gold Coast from 1776 to 1820.[342] For the eighteenth century, port towns like Anomabu, Cape Coast, and Elmina recorded a total of 168,348, 100,434, and 85,636 slave exports, respectively.[343]

The same, however, cannot be said of Appolonia. Appolonia appears to be the only Gold Coast port town with the fewest slave export numbers, as Table 1 suggests. Eltis has argued that high slave export numbers in any area of West Africa and West-Central Africa reflect a high concentration of slave trading in that area, and vice versa.[344] Relating Eltis' thesis to Table 1, it is evident that Gold Coast port towns like Anomabu, Cape Coast, and Elmina were active sites for slave trading, whereas Appolonia was an outlier in the Gold Coast slave-trading economy. This logic finds proper expression when contextualized within the pre-colonial Gold Coast population densities for the respective port towns, especially for Appolonia.

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[341] Scholars like Rebecca Shumway, K. Y. Daaku, and Walter Rodney confirm this historical fact. See Rebecca Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Boydell & Brewer, 2014); Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600-1720*; Walter Rodney, "Gold and Slaves on the Gold Coast," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 10 (1969): 13–28.

[342] David Eltis, "African and European Relations in the Last Century of the Transatlantic Slave Trade," in *From Slave Trade to Empire: European Colonisation of Black Africa 1780s-1880s*, ed. Pétré-Grenouilleau (London: UK: Routledge, 2014), 27.

[343] See Table 1 for the eighteenth-century export figures for Anomabu, Cape Coast, and Elmina.

[344] Eltis, "African and European Relations in the Last Century of the Transatlantic Slave Trade," 27-8.

Pre-Colonial Gold Coast Population: Projections

The population estimates for pre-colonial Gold Coast and, generally, pre-colonial Africa cannot be established with much confidence since there are no precise contemporary population figures.[345] "The estimates that do exist (especially for the Gold Coast) establish an order of magnitude rather than statistical exactitude."[346] Therefore, demographic scholars who examine pre-colonial Gold Coast populations often do so by multiplying the total number of households or quarters—usually, tax-paying households—in a given town by the average number of dwellers in each household.[347] The average household dwellers is often projected to be 3 to 5 people for the sixteenth century and 5 to 10 for the seventeenth, albeit the factors accounting for the increase in household numbers for these periods remain unclear.[348] Historian Ray Kea, who has studied pre-colonial Gold Coast demographics, has postulated that, with the exception of Elmina, pre-eighteenth-century Gold Coast port towns were less populous than subcoastal and inland towns.[349] He maintains that most port towns had fewer than 5,000 inhabitants.[350] For instance, the seventeenth- and the early eighteenth-century populations of Axim, Cape Coast, and Anomabu, likely stood around 3,000, 4,000, and 7,000, respectively.[351] Kea believes that Axim had about 150 family or household heads (*moradores*) in 1638, putting the town's population around 1500 (i.e., 150 households multiplied by an average of 10 household

[345] Historians Ray Kea and Patrick Manning affirm this notion. See Ray A. Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Polities in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 32; Patrick Manning, "African Population: Projections, 1850-1960," in *The Demographics of Empire. The Colonial Order and the Creation of Knowledge in Africa,* ed. Karl Ittmann, Dennis D. Cordell, and Gregory H. Maddox (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010), 247.
[346] Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Polities in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast*, 32; Merrick Posnansky, "Begho: LIfe and Times," *Journal of West African History* Vol 1, no. No. 2 (2015), 101.
[347] Ibid.
[348] Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Polities in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast*, 37; Posnansky, "Begho: LIfe and Times," 101.
[349] Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Polities in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast*, 37.
[350] Ibid.
[351] Ibid, pp. 32-50.

dwellers).[352] However, by the 1690s, Axim's population increased to about 2,000 to 3,000 residents, of which 300 constituted the town's militia.[353]

The Cape Coast township also had about 200 houses in 1667, and by the 1690s, Cape Coast's population had increased to about 3,000 to 4,000 residents.[354] Anomabu and Kormantine each had a population size of about 6000 to 7000 inhabitants by the end of the seventeenth century.[355] Elmina, on the other hand, was different. Owing to its relevant commercial position on the Gold Coast, Elmina witnessed a sharp population increase from 4,000 to about 15,000–20,000 residents between 1621 and 1682.[356] However, smallpox epidemics and political conflicts in and around Elmina caused a population decline from 1682 to 1702.[357] The town's population increased again after 1702 and, by 1709, Elmina was considered the most populous port town on the Gold Coast.[358]

In the case of Appolonia, there seem to be no population estimates for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, some contemporaneous Europeans have speculated about Appolonia's nineteenth-century population totals. For instance, in 1810, John Fountain, a commandant of the British fortress in Appolonia, projected the kingdom's population to be between 20,000 and 25,000.[359] The English entrepreneur and colonial official Francis Swanzy also estimated the population at 30,000 in 1842.[360] According to Thévenard, a French commandant of the French post at Assinie, Appolonia's 1847 population stood around 15,000, and, in 1848, William Winniett, the then Lieutenant-Governor of the Gold Coast, projected the

[352] Ibid, 38.
[353] Ibid.
[354] Ibid.
[355] Ibid, 38.
[356] Ibid.
[357] Ibid.
[358] Ibid.
[359] Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 236.
[360] Ibid.

population to be around 10,000.[361] In his 1849 census of Appolonia and Dixcove, a port town in southwestern Gold Coast, James Coleman Fitzpatrick, a mid-nineteenth-century Acting Governor and Judicial Assessor of the British settlements on the Gold Coast, estimated Appolonia's population size to be 9,160 residents.[362] The above population figures can only be viewed as projections heavily predicated on the reporters' demographic awareness of the Appolonian Kingdom. The perceptible inconsistency and sharp declines in the population estimates, which remain unexplained, reflect Europeans divergent views of Appolonia and its demographics.

It is important to note that Appolonia was a kingdom with several coastal and inland towns under its sway.[363] In contrast, Elmina, Cape Coast, and the other principal export areas, except Accra, were townships. Hence, one may expect Appolonia's population to be significantly higher than the other port towns. As Valsecchi states, regarding the nineteenth-century population projections for Appolonia, it may be safe to consider John Fountain's 1810 estimate of 20,000–25,000 residents more credible than the others because of his prolonged stay in Appolonia, which might have afforded him considerable demographic awareness of the kingdom.[364] Against this backdrop, we will assume that Appolonia's 1810 population was between 20,000 and 25,000. If the kingdom's population stood at twenty to twenty-five thousand in 1810, how many people lived in Appolonia during the eighteenth century? This question can be answered using a back-projection approach like historian Patrick Manning's 2010 demographic model to speculate about Appolonia's 1700s population.

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[361] Ibid.
[362] TNA CO 96/15, Acting Gov. Fitzpatrick to Earl Grey, Cape Coast Castle, 20th April 1849. Also cited in Pierluigi Valsecchi, "Free People, Slaves and Pawns in the Western Gold Coast: The Demography of Dependency in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century British Archival Source," *Ghana Studies* 17, no. 1 (2014), 235.
[363] Valsecchi, "Free People, Slaves and Pawns in the Western Gold Coast," 238.
[364] Ibid.

In his book chapter titled "African Population: Projections, 1850–1960," Manning scrupulously analyzes the population estimates and decennial variations in population growth rates for several African regions from 1850 to 1960.[365] Manning pays attention to population vitals such as age, sex, birth-rates, death-rates, and out-migrations and assumes that birth- and death-rates rose and fell in similar patterns for various world regions from 1850 to 1960.[366] Using the 2006 United Nations Population Division's (UNPD) census estimates as a benchmark and India's 1871-1951 population growth rates as a proxy, Manning offers revealing conclusions such as the following: African populations in the seventeenth century were probably larger than those of the eighteenth century because several African regions experienced slow growths or even declines, primarily caused by negative changes in birth- and death-rates, and out-migration triggered by the transatlantic slave trade. [367] Moreover, beginning in the early nineteenth century, African populations "went from crude growth rates of no more than 0.2% to rates averaging over 2% by the 1950s."[368] Stated differently, the crude growth rates for African populations for every ten years from the early 1800s to 1960 ranged between 0.2% and 2.0%.[369] This growth rate bracket ($\geq 0.2\%$ and $\leq 2\%$) serves as a tenable parameter for calculating Appolonia's population totals from the early nineteenth century back to the first decade of the eighteenth century.

Working with Fountain's 1810 estimate of at least 20,000 residents and Manning's lowest decennial variation rate of 0.2%, the population of Appolonia would have dropped by

[365] Manning, "African Population: Projections, 1850-1960," 246, 250.
[366] Ibid.
[367] Ibid, 250.
[368] Ibid, 264. Manning's <2% average growth rate projection appears close to the United Nation Population Division's (UNPD) average growth rate of 2.5% for Ghana's (formerly, the Gold Coast) population estimates for the period from 1950 to present. See the UNPD's World Population Prospects 2019 at https://population.un.org/wpp/Maps/.
[369] The World Health Organization defines crude growth rate as "the ratio between the number of live births in a population during a given year and the total mid-year population for the same year, usually multiplied by 1,000." World Health Organization, "Indicator Metadata Registry Details," The Global Health Observatory: Explore a World of Health Data, n.d., https://www.who.int/data/gho/indicator-metadata-registry/imr-details/1139.

about 40 people every ten years—that is, 0.2% of 20,000. This would have put Appolonia's 1800 population at 19,960 residents, 1750's at 19,760 residents, and its 1700's population at 19,560 residents.[370] Conversely, the higher variation rate of 2% would have put the kingdom's population totals at 19,600 residents for 1800, 17,600 residents for 1750, and 15,600 residents for 1700. Based on these figures, therefore, Appolonia's 1700 to 1800 population could be projected between 19,560 and 19,960 residents for the 0.2% declining rate and 15,600 and 19,600 residents for the 2.0% declining rate.

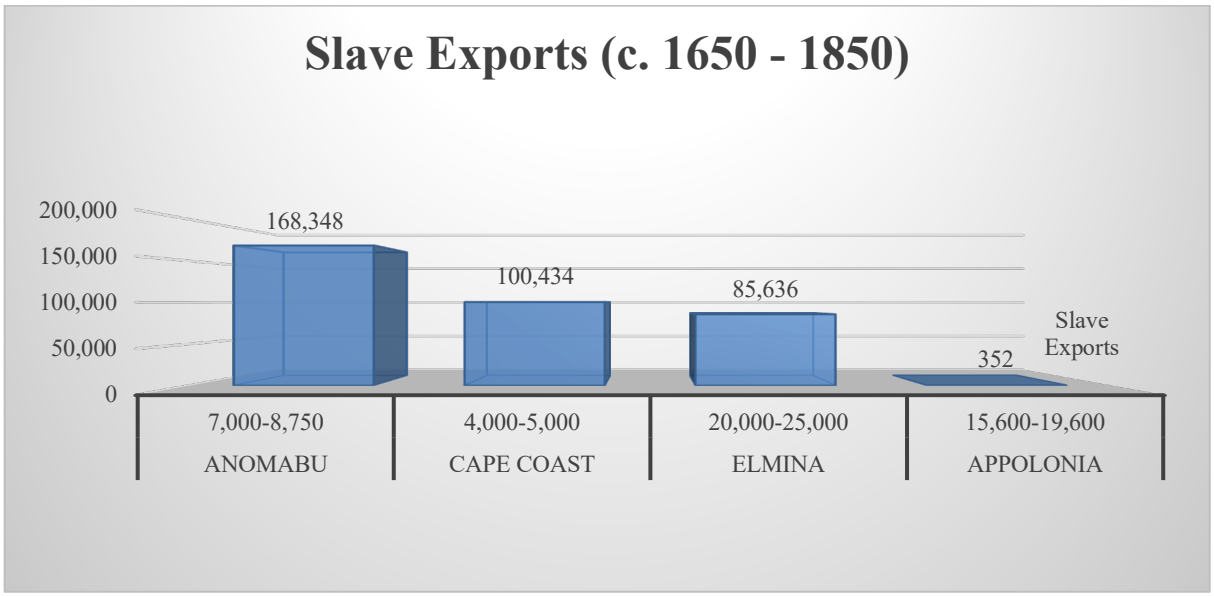
The 2.0% change rate estimate (15,600–19,600 residents) seems more reasonable and congruous with alternative crude growth rates for other Gold Coast port towns. For instance, Ray Kea projected Cape Coast's 1690s population to be, at most, 4,000 residents.[371] J. J. Crooks also estimated Cape Coast's 1810 population size to be 5,000 residents.[372] The 1,000-population difference in Cape Coast's late seventeenth- and early nineteenth-century populace represents about 25% growth rate. Applying the 25% growth rate to Appolonia's 1700 population size of 15,600 leaves the kingdom's population at 19,500 residents—a figure close to the proposed Appolonian 1800 population size of 19,600. Thus, Cape Coast's 1690s–1810 population growth variation helps to validate my proposed population estimates of 15,600 to 19,600 residents for eighteenth-century Appolonia.

These population estimates help contextualize the degree of slave trading in the different port areas and, importantly, measure Appolonia's participation in the Atlantic slave trade. If a relatively sparsely populated port area exported hundreds and thousands of enslaved people, that

[370] Subtract 40 people from the population total for the previous decade. For instance, 40 –19,960 (i.e., the population for 1800) = 19,920 residents (for the year 1790). The same formular is used to estimate the population totals for the preceding decades and for the 2.0% variation rate.
[371] Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Polities in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast*, 38.
[372] J. J. Crooks, *Records Relating to the Gold Coast Settlements from 1750 to 1874* (London, UK: Cass Publishers, 1973), 210.

fact points to the area's active involvement in the Atlantic slave trade and vice versa.

Figure 10: Sampled Port Towns and Their Export and Population Figures
(Population estimates on the x-axis and export figures on the y-axis)



Note: the slave export numbers for the respective Gold Coast regions are sourced from Table 1 on page 6. The figures represent the summation of all slave exports from the regions from 1650 to 1850.

The chart above compares the slave export numbers vis-à-vis the projected eighteenth-century population densities of Anomabu, Cape Coast, Elmina, and Appolonia. It shows that, except for Appolonia, the three other port towns exported more enslaved people than their population sizes. Elmina, whose projected population total ranged between 20,000–25,000 residents, traded about 85,636 enslaved people; Cape Coast, with roughly 4,000–5000 residents, traded about 100,434 enslaved people, and Anomabu, with a population of about 7,000–8,750 residents, exported about 168,348 enslaved people. Appolonia, on the other hand, traded 352 enslaved people, although its population size ranged between 15,600–19,600 inhabitants. This data reveals two facts: that Anomabu, Cape Coast, and Elmina were active sites for the transatlantic slave trade, and that most enslaved people came from outside these port towns. Additionally, relating the above data to David Eltis' thesis that high slave export numbers in an

area reflected a high concentration of slave trading in that area, and vice versa, it is evident that the transatlantic slave trade was less concentrated in Appolonia, relative to the other Gold Coast port towns. This finding suggests that Appolonia's participation in the transatlantic slave trade was extremely insignificant. It was indeed an outlier in the Gold Coast slave-trading economy.

The above conclusion helps to reconsider theories that generally portray the coastal areas of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Gold Coast and West Africa as hotbeds for the Atlantic slave trade. Research done in recent years shows that "wherever the transatlantic slave trade increased along West Africa's coastline, it initially took its victims from coastal and near-coastal communities."[373] As the slave trade flourished throughout the eighteenth century, however, victims of slave exports were outsourced from the hinterland.[374] We witness this phenomenon in the early eighteenth-century Gold Coast as several thousands of the enslaved from the interior were brought to coastal towns like Anomabu, Cape Coast, and Elmina for export.[375] These port towns quickly became important slave-trading sites that attracted both Africans and non-Africans, including West African long-distance traders like the Dyula and Fulani and European slave traders from Portugal, Britain, and the Netherlands.[376] The rise of the slave trade and the influx of enslaved peoples in Gold Coast's coastal towns have led scholars like Rebecca Shumway and Akosua Perbi to argue that from the eighteenth century to the first few decades of the nineteenth century, the entire Gold Coast coastline transformed into a site of intensive slave trading.[377] As shown above, the Kingdom of Appolonia lends itself as an exception to this thesis. As an outlier in the Gold Coast slave trade geography, Appolonia

[373] Rebecca Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Boydell & Brewer, 2014), 92.
[374] Shumway, 92.
[375] Ibid. Also see W. E. F. Ward, *A History of Ghana*, 4th edition (George Allen & Unwin, 1959), 45, 70; Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours, 1700-1807*, 24.
[376] Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 92.
[377] Ibid , 92-3; Perbi, *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana From the 15th to the 19th Century*, 118.

demonstrates a unique case for understanding how a group of West Africans located in a critical slave-trading zone (i.e., the slave-exporting areas of the Gold Coast) managed to relatively insulate themselves from (or resist) the transatlantic slave trade.

The above discussion, however, only establishes a correlation between the Atlantic slave trade and Appolonia's involvement in the trade. It does not demonstrate causes and effects. While it is not my objective to examine the effects of the slave trade on Appolonia, it is worth investigating the cause(s) of Appolonia's minimal participation in the slave trade. The remainder of this chapter attempts to address why Appolonia recorded such few slave exports or why the Atlantic slave trade appeared to be less concentrated in the kingdom.

Why did Appolonia Experience Minimal Slave Exportations?

One can approach the above question from two angles. First, by understanding broader factors that gave impetus to slave exports on the Gold Coast and how those factors shaped slave trading and exportation in Appolonia. And second, by examining how internal conditions in Appolonia might have contributed to the kingdom's minimal involvement in the slave trade. For the latter, I have identified one main condition: the *amonle* ritual, a venerable socio-religious custom in Appolonia that discouraged Appolonian leaders from selling their own subjects into the Atlantic slave trade, especially during the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. Regarding the broader (or external) factors, three conditions are highlighted: the prevalence of warfare in and around the Gold Coast port areas, resulting in the mass production of enslaved people, European settlement and influence in the port towns, and the presence and utility of European fortresses in the port towns. These three factors helped to increase slave trading and exports in more-active areas like Anomabu, Elmina, and Cape Coast. In the case of Appolonia, however, these factors did little to stimulate the slave trade and slave exportations.

External Factors: Prevalence of Warfare

Africanist scholars like Walter Rodney, Paul Lovejoy, Martin Klein, and John Thornton have established that the transatlantic slave trade in Africa thrived on political instability, which predominantly expressed itself through inter-group warfare.[378] These wars were often an ensuing consequence of imperial projects.[379] When kingdoms engaged in territorial expansion programs, inter-group warfare became almost inevitable.[380] The seventeenth- through the nineteenth-century empire-expansion wars of the kingdoms of Dahomey, Kaabu, Kongo, and Oyo represent prime examples.[381] In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Gold Coast, large-scale wars primarily manifested itself in state formation processes.[382] The rise of Gold Coast kingdoms such as the Denkyira, Akwamu, Akyem, and Asante engendered intense political conflicts on the Gold

[378] Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Baltimore, Maryland: Black Classic Press, 2011), 97-102; Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 80-90; John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 98-116; John K. Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa, 1500-1800* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 127-148; Martin A. Klein, "The Slave Trade and Decentralized Societies," *The Journal of African History* 42, no. 1 (2001), 44. Robin Law, "Dahomey and the Slave Trade: Reflections on the Historiography of the Rise of Dahomey," *The Journal of African History* 27, no. 2 (1986), 237–67.

[379] Ibid.

[380] Klein, "The Slave Trade and Decentralized Societies," 42; Law, "Dahomey and the Slave Trade," 238.

[381] See Robin Law, *The Oyo Empire c. 1600-c. 1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Aldershot, England; Brookfield, Vt.: Gregg Revivals, 1992); Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa, 1500-1800*; Robin Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving "Port", 1727-1892* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2004); I. A. Akinjogbin, *Dahomey and Its Neighbours, 1708-1818* (London, UK: University of London (School of Oriental and African Studies), 1967); J. Cameron Monroe, *The Precolonial State in West Africa: Building Power in Dahomey* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014); John K. Thornton, *The Kingdom of Kongo: Civil War and Transition, 1641-1718* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983); Toby Green, "Architects of Knowledge, Builders of Power: Constructing the Kaabu 'Empire', 16 Th -17 Th Centuries," *Mande Studies* 11, no. 1 (2023): 91–112; Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast: 1545-1800* (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1970).

[382] Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 92; R. A. Kea, "Trade, State Formation and Warfare on the Gold Coast, 1600 - 1826" (Ph.D., London: UK, School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London), 1974), https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.461582; Francis Agbodeka, *An Economic History of Ghana from the Earliest Times* (Accra, GH: Ghana Universities Press, 1992), 35-36; Kwamina B. Dickson, *A Historical Geography of Ghana* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 57-59.

Coast and its interior, especially from the second half of the seventeenth century through the eighteenth.[383]

On the one hand, the warfare stymied trading activities on the Gold Coast, and on the other, they helped produce lots of enslaved people for both the Atlantic slave market and domestic use.[384] As Martin Klein explains, state development processes in precolonial West Africa necessitated kingdoms to obtain external human resources, mainly enslaved people, to reproduce themselves.[385] Klein further notes, "The stock of slaves must be constantly renewed, either because the slaves are bit by bit integrated (into the society) and thus less exploitable, or because slaves must continually be sold for the state to provision itself with firearms and horses."[386] Klein's thesis proves accurate in the case of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Gold Coast, as many Gold Coast kingdoms contributed significant numbers of slaves to the Atlantic slave trade through their empire-expansion programs.[387]

The Denkyira Kingdom represents a good case study of this phenomena. The kingdom was formed sometime in the 1620s, and owing to her aggressive empire-expansion programs, as well as her quest to dominate commerce in the western part of the Gold Coast, Denkyira

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[383] See Ward, *A History of Ghana*, 26, 32; McCaskie, "Denkyira in the Making of Asante c. 1660-1720," 64; Ivor Wilks, "The Rise of the Akwamu Empire, 1650-1710.," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana.* 3 (1957): 99–136.

[384] See Ivor Wilks, "The Rise of the Akwamu Empire, 1650-1710," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana.* 3 (1957), 99–136; J. Gordon, "Some Oral Traditions of Denkyira," *Transactions of the Gold Coast & Togoland Historical Society* 1, no. 3 (1953), 27–33; Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600-1720*; T. C. McCaskie, "Denkyira in the Making of Asante c. 1660-1720," *The Journal of African History* 48, no. 1 (2007): 1–25; Walter Rodney, "Gold and Slaves on the Gold Coast," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 10 (1969), 15.

[385] Martin A. Klein, "The Slave Trade and Decentralized Societies," *The Journal of African History* 42, no. 1 (2001), 48.

[386] Ibid.

[387] See Ward, *A History of Ghana* 45; Per Hernæs, "A Symbol of Power: Christianborg Castle in Ghanaian History," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, no. 9 (2005): 149; Ray A. Kea, "Administration and Trade in the Akwamu Empire, 1681-1730," in *West African Culture Dynamics: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives*, ed. B.K. Swartz (Jr) and Raymond E. Dumett (The Hague: Mouton & Co., the Netherlands, 1980), 371–92; Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours, 1700-1807*, 59-62; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa* 120, 125.

conquered neighboring states like the Akani, Etsi, Aowin, Sefwi, Wassa, and Twifo by the 1660s.[388] Historian Tom McCaskie explains that "between the 1660s and the 1690s, Denkyira was the dominant power among the Twi-speaking, Akan peoples of the Ofin-Pra river basin."[389] A significant outcome of Denkyira's successful conquests was the excessive production of an enslaved population of whom several were taken to port towns like Elmina and Cape Coast for export.[390]

The Akwamu, another powerful Akan kingdom, also exerted robust political control on the eastern frontier of the Gold Coast, extending its sway to the West African slave coast.[391] Established in 1629, Akwamu conquered several territories such as Accra and Agona and expanded its domination southward to the Accra coast where the Christianborg Castle was established.[392] Historian Walter Rodney notes that the Danes at the Christianborg Castle conveyed some 4,239 enslaved people to the Americas between 1687 and 1700, and the Akwamu were a significant contributor to this export.[393] Like the Denkyira Kingdom, Akwamu's aggressive empire-expansion activities, which involved warfare, raiding, and other forms of violence, encouraged the production, sale, and export of enslaved people on the Gold Coast,

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[388] Gordon, "Some Oral Traditions of Denkyira," 27-33; McCaskie, "Denkyira in the Making of Asante c. 1660-1720," *The Journal of African History* 48, no. 1 (2007), 1-2.
[389] T. C. McCaskie, "Denkyira in the Making of Asante c. 1660-1720," 1; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 120, 125.
[390] Ole Justesen and James Manley, *Danish Sources for the History of Ghana, 1657-1754* (Copenhagen: Det Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, 2005), 46.
[391] See Ivor Wilks, "The Rise of the Akwamu Empire, 1650-1710," 99–136; I. Wilks, "Akwamu and Otublohum: An Eighteenth-Century Akan Marriage Arrangement," *Africa* 29, no. 4 (October 1959): 391–404; Justesen and Manley, *Danish sources for the history of Ghana*; Kea, *A Cultural and Social History of Ghana from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century: The Gold Coast in the Age of Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*; Ray A. Kea, "Administration and Trade in the Akwamu Empire, 1681-1730," in *West African Culture Dynamics: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives*, ed. B.K. Swartz (Jr) and Raymond E. Dummett (The Hague: Mouton & Co., the Netherlands, 1980), 371–92.
[392] See Wilks, "The Rise of the Akwamu Empire, 1650-1710."; Wilks, "Akwamu and Otublohum"; Justesen and Manley, *Danish sources for the history of Ghana, 1657-1754*; Kea, *A Cultural and Social History of Ghana from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century: The Gold Coast in the Age of Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*; Kea, "Administration and Trade in the Akwamu Empire, 1681-1730"; Walter Rodney, "Gold and Slaves on the Gold Coast," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 10 (1969), 15.
[393] Rodney, "Gold and Slaves on the Gold Coast," 16.

especially in Accra.[394]

In the case of eighteenth-century Appolonia, however, political conflicts appeared to have rather caused a decline in trade, particularly the slave trade and export, than an increase in them. Throughout its history, Appolonia engaged in warfare with Gold Coast kingdoms like the Asante, Wassa, and Anyi, and with European groups like the Dutch and the British.[395] Although Appolonia emerged victorious in few instances (in the case of the Dutch, for instance), its victories were not significantly decisive to allow for territorial expansion or the subjugation of an opponent to vassal status.[396] Hence, Appolonia's involvement in wars did not seem to produce slaves *en masse* for the Atlantic slave commerce. In fact, these conflicts seemed to have caused a decline in trade in and around Appolonia instead of helping to increase slave production and export, as suggested by some contemporaneous European observers.[397]

For instance, on 15 October 1771, John Demarin, a prominent eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British merchant who frequented the West African coast, observed that gold and enslaved people were traded at Fort Appolonia, the European fortress in Appolonia.[398] However, at the time of writing, the trade in gold and enslaved people had considerably declined.[399] Reporting on the late eighteenth-century trade at Fort Appolonia, Demarin states, "The gold trade as well as the slave trade is ruined; . . . Indeed, the disadvantages [that] trade labours under now are incredible, and I am much mistaken if any ship will get interest for her money, except the prices are very high in the West-Indies, and little or no mortality amongst the

[394] Ibid.
[395] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 13; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 120-125; Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours, 1700-1807*, 41.
[396] Pierluigi Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 203.
[397] T70/1590, John Fountain, Report on Fort Appolonia, 1810. Detached Papers, p. 181, The National Archives, London, United Kingdom, 18 December 2021.
[398] John Peter Demarin and Merchant, *A Treatise Upon the Trade from Great-Britain to Africa: Humbly Recommended to the Attention of Government* (R. Baldwin, 1772), 112.
[399] Ibid.

slaves, be assured."[400]

Although Demarin does not precisely indicate why the trade had declined, John Fountain, a late eighteenth- and an early nineteenth-century European merchant and commandant at Fort Appolonia, and Englishman Diggles Bayley, attribute the degenerating commerce to the prevalence of political conflict. In 1810, J. Fountain lamented that because of intense violence in and around Appolonia, external trade and agricultural activities within the region had drastically declined.[401] People feared going to their farms.[402] D. Bayley also affirmed Fountain's observation in 1816.[403] The above historical examples cast warfare (and broadly, political instability) as an obstruction to trade in Appolonia: when political instability surged in and around Appolonia, trade—the slave trade included—declined. The reason for this occurrence may be related to the limited European presence in Appolonia and the minimal use of Fort Appolonia for slave trading.

External Factor: European Presence & the Existence/Utility of European Fortresses

It appears that, in Gold Coast port areas, there existed a direct, positive correlation between European settlement/fortresses and slave trading and exportation. Places such as Accra, Anomabu, Cape Coast, and Elmina, which had high concentrations of European settlements and relatively active European fortresses, experienced high slave trading and export numbers.[404] By contrast, Appolonia, where European presence/settlement was minimal and their fortress, less

[400] Ibid, 112.
[401] Ibid.
[402] Ibid.
[403] T70/1601, D. Bayley, State and Condition of Appolonia Fort the 1st of April 1816. Detached Papers, p. 242, The National Archives, London, United Kingdom, 18 December 2021.
[404] See Table 1. Scholars like Randy Sparks, Albert van Dantzig, and Akosua Perbi, demonstrate this notion in Randy J. Sparks, *Where the Negroes Are Masters: An African Port in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Dantzig, *Forts and Castles of Ghana*; Perbi, *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana from the 15th to the 19th Century*.

versatile, recorded low export figures.[405] The history of European settlement and activities on the Gold Coast helps to contextualize the afore-articulated propositions.

The coming of the Portuguese, the first European explorers and traders, to the Gold Coast in 1471 marked the beginning of a massive transformation in Gold Coast's political economy. The Portuguese presence and activities in places like Elmina, Shama, and Axim gave rise to intense competition among Gold Coast dwellers over the control of Afro-European trade.[406] Out of this competition emerged local merchant princes called *Abrempon*, whose utility in Afro-European commerce was diverse and complex.[407] Internationally, the Gold Coast became intricately integrated into the broader Atlantic world in dynamic ways that attracted other Europeans to the region. The Spaniards came in 1477 and left a few decades later.[408] The British also came in the mid-sixteenth century.[409] A few decades later, other Europeans, including the Dutch (1591), Swedes (1650), Danes (1659), and the Brandenburgers (1682), came to the Gold Coast.[410] This influx of Europeans on the Gold Coast gave rise to the creation of European settlements.[411]

Historian K. Y. Daaku maintains that the establishment of European settlements on the

[405] Table 1 shows the few Appolonian export numbers. Historians of Appolonia like P. Valsecchi and M. Alibah discuss the minimal European presence in Appolonia. See Valsecchi, "Free People, Slaves and Pawns in the Western Gold Coast," 223-246; Alibah, *The European Presence in Nzemaland (1550-1957)*, 13.
[406] Ibid.
[407] John K. Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours,* 25.
[408] John Vogt, *Portuguese Rule on the Gold Coast, 1469-1682* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1979), 13; Albert Van Dantzig, *Forts and Castles of Ghana*, 16.
[409] Ibid, 13-14
[410] Ibid, 3; Also see Christopher R. DeCorse, "The Danes on the Gold Coast: Culture Change and the European Presence," *The African Archaeological Review* 11 (1993): 149–73; Larry W. Yarak, *Asante and the Dutch, 1744-1873* (Oxford England: New York: Clarendon Press, 1990); Dantzig, *Forts and Castles of Ghana*; Michel R Doortmont, Pierluigi Valsecchi, and James R Anquandah, *The Ankobra Gold Route: Studies in the Historical Relationship between Western Ghana and the Dutch* (Accra: GH: The Ankobra Gold Route Project, 2014); Robert Porter, "European Activity on the Gold Coast, 1620-1667" (PhD Thesis, Pretoria, South Africa, University of South Africa, 1974).
[411] Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600-1720*, 24.

Gold Coast officially began in the second half of the sixteenth century.[412] This period also marked the commencement of active European commercial activities and competitions on the Gold Coast.[413] As these competitions intensified over time, European settlements expanded. David Eltis explains that "in contrast to the Windward Coast (i.e., the area stretching from present-day Ivory Coast to Liberia), the Gold Coast had by far the largest European land-based presence of any part of sub-Saharan Africa, except for Angola, prior to the mid-nineteenth century. Where Senegambia and Sierra Leone had islands, the Gold Coast had fortifications, albeit built with the permission of African rulers."[414] The expansion of European settlements on the Gold Coast occurred concurrently with the creation of forts and castles. The latter was a by-product of the former.

The establishment of European fortresses on the Gold Coast began with the Portuguese.[415] Soon after they arrived in Elmina in 1471, the Portuguese negotiated with the then ruler of Elmina to construct the Elmina Castle in 1482.[416] Following the establishment of the Elmina Castle was the construction of Fort Anthony in Axim in 1515, and then Fort San Sebastian (1520) in Shama, all built by the Portuguese.[417] These fortresses continued to spring up across the Gold Coast until 1822 when Fort McCarthy, the last major fort constructed by the British in the Cape Coast township, was erected.[418] In all, there existed roughly 32 fortresses of

[412] Ibid.
[413] Ibid.
[414] Eltis, "African and European Relations, 27."
[415] Vogt, *Portuguese Rule on the Gold Coast, 1469-1682*, 23-4, and Dantzig, *Forts and Castles of Ghana*, 3-4.
[416] Ibid.
[417] Ibid.
[418] Dantzig, *Forts and Castles of Ghana*, 6-9; Ward, *A History of Ghana*, 76-79. UNESCO World Heritage Centre, "Forts and Castles, Volta, Greater Accra, Central and Western Regions," UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2019, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/34/.

Figure 11: Forts and Castles of the Gold Coast

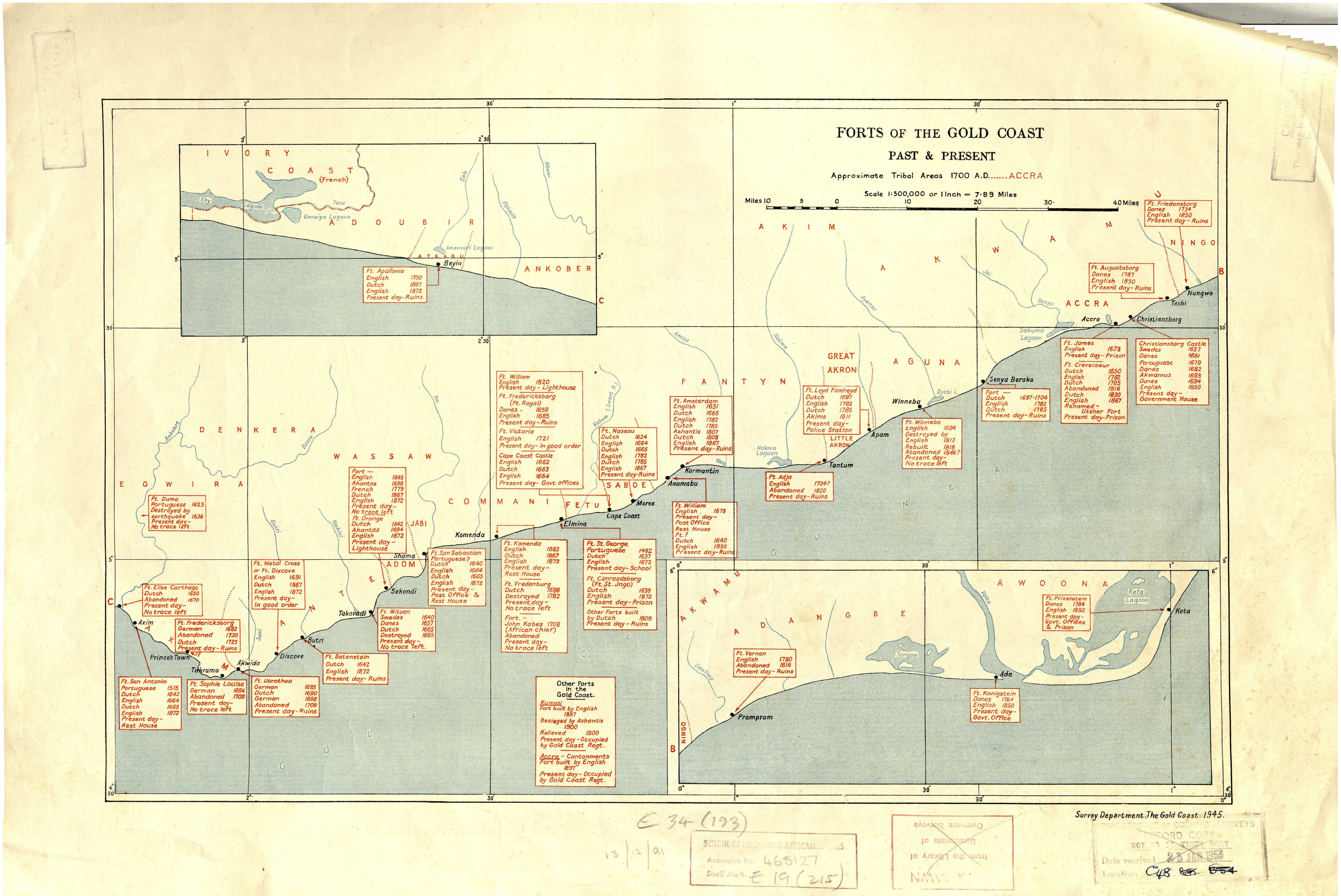

Figure 11 (cont'd) Copyright: The above map was obtained from the Special Collections of the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, [E 34 (123)], in December 2021. The map was created in 1945 by the Survey Department of the Gold Coast colonial government.

which three were castles and 29 were forts.[419] Figure 11 above offers a visual representation of the uneven distribution of European fortifications, as well as their dwelling places, on the Gold Coast.

Figure 11 shows that the area stretching from Axim to Accra experienced an early and relatively extensive European presence because several European groups dwelled and established fortresses there as far back as the late fifteenth century (as in the case of Elmina). However, in the case of Appolonia, European (precisely, the British and the Dutch) presence was nominal, and their earliest official settlement there occurred in the mid-eighteenth century.[420] As already indicated, Gold Coast port towns with extensive European settlement and active European fortresses witnessed intensive slave trading and high slave export figures.[421] Cape Coast, Elmina, Anomabu, and Accra were representative places where European presence and fortresses positively impacted slave trading and exports.[422]

In eighteenth-century Anomabu, for instance, Fante caboceers (chiefs) and *abrempon* (local merchant princes) such as John Corrente collaborated with European merchants and officials like Joseph Dawson, a late eighteenth-century English commandant of the Anomabu

[419] Ibid
[420] See Figure 11. Scholars like Pierluigi Valsecchi, Martha Alibah, and J. Y. Ackah discuss the relatively nominal European settlement in Appolonia, especially for the pre-1848 era. See J. Y. Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 14-15; Martha Alibah, *A History of the Nzema in Pre-Colonial Ghana* (Accra: GH: Woeli Publishing Services, 2013) 12; Pierluigi Valsecchi, "Free People, Slaves and Pawns in the Western Gold Coast: The Demography of Dependency in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century British Archival Source," *Ghana Studies* 17, no. 1 (2014): 223–46.
[421] Data from Table 1 and Figure 11 verify the afore-articulated notion. Also, scholars like Larry Yarak and Harvey Feinberg show the correlation between slave trading/exportation and European settlement and active European fortresses on the Gold Coast. See Harvey M. Feinberg, *Africans and Europeans in West Africa: Elminans and Dutchmen on the Gold Coast During the Eighteenth Century* (American Philosophical Society, 1989); Yarak, *Asante and the Dutch, 1744-1873*; Sparks, *Where the Negroes Are Masters*..
[422] Ibid.

Fort, to centralize the trade in enslaved people in order to enhance more significant exports and profit. [423] Historian James Stewart explains that foreign slave traders, especially Rhode Islanders (from the United States), who came to Anomabu benefited from this organized trade network. He writes, "Rhode Islanders mingled with resident British agents and local Fante traders, who in turn had connections with inland slave suppliers, to obtain slaves."[424] With such trade networks and an active fortress (William Fort) in place, the Anomabu port town was well-positioned to funnel a significant number of enslaved people from the Gold Coast to the larger Atlantic world. The presence of several European traders, including the British, Dutch, Danes, Rhode Islanders, and the French, at Anomabu also was a guarantee that the port town would become a hotbed for the Atlantic slave commerce. Little wonder the English Trading Company on the Gold Coast, in 1750, considered Anomabu as "the key to the Whole Trade of the Gold Coast" and, in 1773, classified it, "the Mart for trade."[425]

In contrast to Anomabu, Appolonia was an exception to the general assumption that European presence and fortresses were catalysts to the Atlantic slave trade. Although the British settled in Beyin, the then capital of Appolonia, in the 1750s, and constructed a fort (Fort Appolonia) there in the late 1760s, Appolonia remained resilient in resisting the growth of the Atlantic slave trade within its boundaries.[426] Two major factors help to explain Appolonia's

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[423] James Brewer Stewart, *Venture Smith and the Business of Slavery and Freedom* (Amherst: MA: Univ of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 61.
[424] Ibid.
[425] Sparks, *Where the Negroes Are Masters*, 3.
[426] Concerning the date for the establishment of Fort Appolonia, scholars have disagreed on a precise year. Valsecchi, for instance, has suggested 1765 as the year in which the fortress was built, whereas others have proposed 1768. It appears that the construction of Fort Appolonia begun sometime in 1765/66 and ended in 1768. However, Henry Meredith and Martha Alibah have maintained that the fort was built in 1686, which seems implausible for two main reasons. First, Valseechi has scrupulously established that the Kingdom of Appolonia was founded sometime in the late 1600s, possibly, in the 1690s, and it became crystallized during the first decade of the 1700s. By this era, there was no evidence of a European fortress in this nascent kingdom. The absence of evidence of a fort renders the 1686 date historically impossible. Second, scholars like J. Y. Ackah, P. Valseechi, P. van Assum, and Martha Alibah herself have agreed that King Amihyia Kpanyinli was the one who invited the British to establish the

resilience. First, as discussed in the preceding chapter, the early kings of Appolonia exercised robust agency in preventing Europeans from permanently settling within the kingdom.[427] This action delayed European entry into Appolonia and stymied their activities and influence in the kingdom, especially in the pre-1750 era.[428] The delayed European presence in Appolonia explains why Appolonia did not record any figures in the years before 1750 (see Table 1). In fact, no European fort had been established. Second, among the many uses of Fort Appolonia, the only European fortress in the Appolonian Kingdom, the trade in enslaved Africans was not its primary function even during the second half of the eighteenth century through the early nineteenth century.[429] These two factors contributed to the minimal concentration of slave trading and exportation in Appolonia.

The Agency of Appolonian Kings

While places like Elmina and Axim started receiving Europeans into their territories as far back as the late 1400s and the early 1500s, Appolonia began witnessing a formal European

fort. Amihyia Kpanyinli is believed to have ruled Appolonia from 1758 to 1779. If Fort Appolonia was indeed constructed on the invitation of Amihyia Kpanyinli, how then could the fort be built in 1686? For further clarification, see Alibah, *A History of the Nzema in Pre-Colonial Ghana*, 14; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 20, 21, 215; Valsecchi, "Free People, Slaves and Pawns in the Western Gold Coast, 238; Henry Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa*, 68. Pim van den Assum, "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764: A Detailed Inquiry about How the Dutch Lost the War" (MPhil Thesis, Leiden, Netherlands, Leiden University, 2012), 8.

[427] Sanderson, "The History of Nzima up to 1874," 95; Alibah, *The European Presence In Nzemaland (1550-1957)*, 11. Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 13-14.
[428] Ibid.
[429] The English Trading Company records do not portray the sale of enslaved people as one of Fort Appolonia's core functions. The records rather demonstrate that Fort Appolonia primarily functioned as a British trading outpost that trafficked goods like gold, ivory, rum, and guns. Meanwhile, similar ledgers for different the British settlements and fortresses in Cape Coast, Accra, and Anomabo show an active sale of enslaved people in those areas. See "Accounts-day book: Apollonia, 1772–1818," T70/1000–5, T70 - Company of Royal Adventurers of England Trading with Africa and Successors, The National Archives, London, United Kingdom, 3 December 2021; "Apollonia: Trade Book, 1771," T 70/1233, T70 - Company of Royal Adventurers of England Trading with Africa and Successors, The National Archives, London, United Kingdom, 3 December 2021; Ledgers for Cape coast, Accra, and Anomabo.

settlement in the second half of the eighteenth century.[430] The delayed European settlement in Appolonia resulted from political interventions that eighteenth-century Appolonian rulers such as Kema Kpanyinli, Annor Blay, and Amihyia Kpanyinli implemented. The Appolonian-Dutch War of 1761-1764, discussed in chapter two, serves as a prime example. In the mid-eighteenth century, the Dutch—who, by then, had established a base in Axim—made several attempts to occupy Appolonia, but King Amihyia Kpanyinli vehemently resisted the Dutch attacks by battling them in war.[431] Amihyia defeated the Dutch on three different occasions.[432] To prevent future Dutch incursions, Amihyia invited the English in the 1750s to settle and construct Fort Appolonia in Beyin, thus playing one European nation (the British) against the other (the Dutch).[433] It took the Dutch more than a century (1867) to officially settle in Beyin, and that arrangement was made possible as a result of the 1867 Anglo-Dutch Gold Coast Treaty.[434]

Although the British and the Dutch settled in Appolonia, Appolonian rulers managed to prevent the creation of expansive European quarters in the kingdom.[435] The British and the Dutch seem to have solely operated within the walls of Fort Appolonia because in present-day Appolonia (now, the Nzema State), there is little to no evidence (i.e., material culture) of a

[430] Vogt, *Portuguese Rule on the Gold Coast, 1469-1682*, 3-4; Dantzig, *Forts and Castles of Ghana*, 26-28.
[431] John Hippisley, "Essays. On the Necessity of Erecting a Fort at Cape Appolonia," pp. 41-46. No. 38747 – T1136(1), Furley Collection, Balme Library, University of Ghana, accessed in August 2019. Also see R. W. Sanderson, "The History of Nzima up to 1874," 95; Alibah, *The European Presence In Nzemaland (1550-1957)*, 11. Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 13-14.
[432] Ibid.
[433] Ibid.
[434] The 1867 Anglo-Dutch Gold Coast Treaty entailed an agreement between Great Britain and the Netherlands to exchange territories on the Gold Coast. All Dutch forts that lay east of Elmina were handed over to the British, whereas all English fortresses in the west of Elmina became properties of the Dutch. The treaty allowed the British to hand over Fort Appolonia to the Dutch, who occupied it until 1872, at which time, the Dutch permanently left the Gold Coast, selling all their estates to the British. (See Van Dantzig, "Le traité d'échange de territoires sur la Côte de l'Or entre la Grande-Bretagne et les Pays-Bas en 1867," 69-96; Ward, *A History of Ghana*, 142; Alibah, *The European Presence in Nzemaland (1550-1957)*, 13; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*; 191.)
[435] Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 120.

historically strong European presence in the region.[436] It, therefore, comes as no surprise that it took the British more than a century (from 1750 to 1857) to acquire a better understanding of Appolonia's inland districts as well as population.[437] This relatively weak eighteenth-century European presence in Appolonia contributed to minimal slave trading and exportation in the Appolonian Kingdom.

Utility of Fort Appolonia

Trade records of the English Company of Merchants Trading to Africa further suggest that, although a European fort existed in Appolonia, the fortress did little to increase the slave trade and export in the kingdom.[438] As stated above, Fort Appolonia was constructed by the British in 1768 at the request of its then King, Amihyia Kpanyinli.[439] The English Company's "Accounts-day Book" (c. 1772–1818) and "Appolonia: Trade Book" (c. 1771) for Fort Appolonia—ledgers documenting monthly trade transactions, infrastructural maintenance expenses, and staff names and their salaries at Fort Appolonia for the second half of the eighteenth century through the early nineteenth century—do not discuss the sale or export of enslaved people from the fort during this period, albeit the names of enslaved locals labeled as "castle slaves," who performed menial work within the fort are listed.[440] The records rather

[436] Throughout my over 24 months of ethnographic research in Nzemaland, I never came across any formerly occupied European quarters in the region other than Fort Appolonia. Some oral histories on Appolonia confirm my belief that Europeans did not create a permanent settlement in Appolonia as did they in places like Cape Coast. See "Asantesem: The Asante Biography Project," *Northwestern University*, Bulletin no. 9, June 1978, 5-14.
[437] Pierluigi Valsecchi, "Free People, Slaves and Pawns in the Western Gold Coast, 236-7.
[438] "Accounts-day book: Apollonia, 1772–1818," T70/1000–5, T70 - Company of Royal Adventurers of England Trading with Africa and Successors, The National Archives, London, United Kingdom, 3 December 2021; "Apollonia: Trade Book, 1771," T 70/1233, T70 - Company of Royal Adventurers of England Trading with Africa and Successors, The National Archives, London, United Kingdom, 3 December 2021.
[439] See Alibah, *A History of the Nzema in Pre-Colonial Ghana*, 14; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 20; Valsecchi, "Free People, Slaves and Pawns in the Western Gold Coast, 238; Henry Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa*, 68.
[440] T70/1000–5, "Accounts-day book: Apollonia, 1772–1818," T70 - Company of Royal Adventurers of England Trading with Africa and Successors, The National Archives, London, United Kingdom, 3 December 2021; T 70/1233, "Apollonia: Trade Book, 1771," T70 - Company of Royal Adventurers of England Trading with Africa and Successors, The National Archives, London, United Kingdom, 3 December 2021.

reveal a preponderance in the trade in gold and ivory.[441]

Figure 12: Fort Appolonia

Copyright: Image of Fort Appolonia taken by the author in the summer of 2018.

The absence of documentation of the sale of enslaved people in the Company's records suggests that the buying and selling of enslaved people at Fort Appolonia was neither the primary nor secondary function of the fort, especially during the second half of the eighteenth century through the early nineteenth century. Meanwhile, fortresses in towns like Cape Coast, Elmina, and Anomabu served as principal entrepôts, which facilitated the transportation of thousands of enslaved people to the Americas during this period. For example, in 1789, William Fort in Anomabu transported about 2,107 enslaved peoples to the Americas—a figure that far exceeds Appolonia's total exports in human being for the century.

The minimal use of Fort Appolonia for slave trading, coupled with the weak European

[441] Ibid.

presence in Appolonia, significantly diminished the intensity of the Atlantic slave trade within the Appolonian Kingdom. In addition to these factors, the *amonle* ritual discouraged the internal production of slaves within the Appolonian society by preventing eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Appolonian leaders from selling Appolonian subjects and newcomers who settled in the kingdom into the Atlantic slave trade. As a result, the *amonle* helped to mitigate the growth of the slave trade in Appolonia.

Internal Factor: The *Amonle* Factor

Africanists historians of the slave trade, including John Thornton, Paul Lovejoy, Robin Law, and Martin Klein have convincingly established that the modality of slave capture in early modern Africa ranged from battles, which produced war captives, to raiding, kidnapping, and later panyarring.[442] The victims of these forms of capture were often outsourced from distant territories.[443] However, as the Atlantic slave trade expanded, especially from the eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century, African slave traders developed alternative means to produce enslaved people from their own society. [444] Although not the norm, this internal means of slave production took the form of selling debtors, "criminals," and, in rare cases, tricking kinfolk into slavery. There is evidence of some pre-colonial Gold Coast and West African society leaders using trickery and other schemes to sell their countryfolk into the Atlantic slave trade.[445]

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[442] Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, 98-101; Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 86-90; Perbi, *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana from the 15th to the 19th Century*, 3; Getz, *Abina and the Important Men*, 125-126.
[443] Ibid; Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 93.
[444] Sparks, "Gold Coast Merchant Families, Pawning, and the Eighteenth-Century British Slave Trade," 318; E. Akyeampong, "History, Memory, Slave-Trade and Slavery in Anlo (Ghana)," *Slavery & Abolition* 22, no. 3 (December 1, 2001), 7-8; Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 47-60.
[445] See, for example, E. Akyeampong, "History, Memory, Slave-Trade and Slavery in Anlo (Ghana)," *Slavery & Abolition* 22, no. 3 (December 1, 2001), 7-8; Charles Piot, "Of Slaves and the Gift: Kabre Sale of Kin during the Era of the Slave Trade," *The Journal of African History* 37, no. 1 (1996): 31–49; Francoise Heritier, 'Des cauris et des

For instance, in the nineteenth-century Kabre society of present-day northern Togoland, brothers reluctantly gave away their sisters' sons as slaves to their neighboring Dagomba people to prevent the latter, the more powerful side, from frequently raiding and indiscriminately seizing their countryfolk.[446] The Dagomba were, by then, under oath to supply the Asante with thousands of enslaved captives annually, forcing them (i.e., the Dagomba) into active slave raiding.[447] According to historian Charles Piot, the Kabre people's practice of giving away their kinfolks to the Dagomba raiders represented both an internal means of slave production in Kabre and the Kabre people's strategy of controlling who was captured: a strategy of self-preservation.[448] On the Gold Coast, a similar incident of internal slave production occurred in nineteenth-century Atorkor, a town in the Anlo society. Historian Emmanuel Akyeampong explicates that Tamakloe, the chief of Atorkor, tricked some community members, belonging to a local entertainment group, to perform for some Europeans on a slave ship docked on the eastern coast of the Gold Coast.[449] The entertainers were seized against their will and transported to the Americas as enslaved individuals.[450]

In Appolonia, however, there is no historical evidence to suggest the existence of organized forms of slave production within the society. Oral testimonies of some Appolonian community leaders suggest that the selling of Appolonian subjects by Appolonian kings into the Atlantic slave trade was virtually non-existent.[451] Although indigenous forms of servitude and

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hommes: production d'esclaves et accumulation de cauris chez les Samo (Haute-Volta)', in C. Mleillassoux (ed.), *L'esclavage en Afrique precoloniale* (Paris, 1975), 477-508; J. P. WAarnier, 'Traite sans raids au Cameroun,' Cah. Ft. Afr, cxIII (1989), 5-32.

[446] See Piot, "Of Slaves and the Gift," 31-49.

[447] Ibid.

[448] Ibid.

[449] Akyeampong, "History, Memory, Slave-Trade and Slavery in Anlo (Ghana), 7-8"

[450] Ibid.

[451] Safohyenle Kwaku Pra, Abusuapanyinli Amihyia, Mr. Stephen Assyne, Nana Takrika VII (Nzulezo chief), Mr. Asuah (priest at Ngelekazo), and Mary Assyne in multiple interviews with the author, the summers of 2020 and 2021, at Beyin, Ngelekazo, and Nzulezo.

dependency such as pawnship existed in Appolonia, it was a rarity for one (even the king) to sell a countryfolk into the Atlantic slave trade.[452] This non-existent internal slave-production scheme in Appolonia can be attributed to the *amonle* ritual, discussed in the preceding chapter.

As earlier explained, the *amonle* constituted a socio-religious custom in pre-colonial Appolonia that helped define social relations and ensure order within the society.[453] Significantly, the *amonle* deterred Appolonian leaders from harming their subjects, particularly new migrants who settled in the kingdom. J. Y. Ackah notes that per the *amonle* agreement, new settlers were strictly bound by oath to never "take up arms against the 'belemgbunli' [king] or any of the towns under his sway."[454] In return, "on no account, however grievous the offense, was the 'belemgbunli'… to kill or execute any member of the lineage of the other [i.e., new settlers]."[455] Ackah goes on to stipulate that "it was precisely because of this 'amonle' that Nzema [i.e., Appolonia] enjoyed that long period of peace which Sanderson considers 'a Golden Age.'"[456] For J. Y. Ackah, the *amonle* covenant constituted the most important factor that shaped Appolonia's prolonged relative peace throughout the eighteenth and the mid-nineteenth century.

In the context of the slave trade, the *amonle* helps explain why the internal production of slaves in Appolonia was seemingly non-existent. The conditions of the *amonle* covenant, which specifically states, *ye dadeɛ ɛnnga me anzɛnye me dehele* (the king's knife would neither 'touch' [harm or kill] me [i.e., the leader of a migrant group] and my relatives), might have discouraged

[452] Ibid. Writers like Henry Meredith and Pierluigi Valseechi discuss the eighteenth- and the early nineteenth-century kings of Appolonia as absolute monarchs and autocratic who practically had the entire population as their dependents. These writers do not mention any instance where the kings sold any of their subjects into the Atlantic slave trade. See Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa; with a Brief History of the African Company*, 40.; Valsecchi, "Free People, Slaves and Pawns in the Western Gold Coast," 238.
[453] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 13.
[454] Ibid, 14.
[455] Ibid.
[456] Ibid, 15; Sanderson, "The History of Nzima up to 1874," 95.

Appolonian leaders from selling new settlers into the Atlantic slave trade.[457] To sell new migrants into the Atlantic slave trade would have constituted harm to the victims—a violation of the *amonle* agreement that is believed to invite the wrath of Appolonian deities and ancestors.[458] Such a violation also empowered the offended party to seek redress against the king, such as refusing to fight the king's battles or pay annual tributes.[459] The *amonle* covenant thus offered Appolonian subjects some level of protection against the Atlantic slave trade, which might have contributed to the reduction of slave trading and exportation within Appolonia.

Inquiring about how some Appolonian community leaders remember the *amonle* covenant and its connection to the Atlantic slave trade, Safohyenle Kabenla of Atuabo shared the following.[460]

> The *amonle* is an ancient custom that is still practiced today. It is an important spiritual covenant, which everyone, including the King, takes seriously. During my installation as a sub-chief, I performed an *amonle* to demonstrate my allegiance to Awulae (the king). I swore on the *amonle* in the presence of human witnesses that I will, at all times, respond to Awulae's call and serve my community. Awulae also swore to offer protection to me, my family, and the entire community. [I asked: it is believed that in pre-colonial Appolonia, the *amonle* agreement discouraged Appolonian kings from selling their subjects into the Atlantic slave trade. Do you know anything about this tradition?] For the slave trade, I do not know much about it. Our elders did not talk about it, and I suspect

[457] Ibid.
[458] Ibid.
[459] Ibid.
[460] Safohyenle Kabenla is a war leader who holds a sub-chief position in the Atuabo palace. Atuabo is the capital of the Eastern Nzema (formally, Eastern Appolonia) paramountcy. Safohyenle Kabenla is in his fifties and serves as a courtier, providing advice to the king of Eastern Nzema on cultural and chieftain matters related to Appolonia.

> that it was not active in Nzema (i.e., Appolonia). As for the *amonle*, I can say that it is highly esteemed for its spiritual potency and social significance so much that it is unlikely for an Awulae to dishonor the terms of the *amonle* covenant. Besides, our stool history says nothing about our previous kings selling their subjects into slavery.[461]

While Safohyenle Kabenla does not directly connect the *amonle* covenant to the slave trade, he draws on Atuabo's chieftain tradition to espouse that pre-colonial Atuabo royals did not engaged in the sale of their subjects in the Atlantic slave trade. He also supports J. Y. Ackah's belief that pre-colonial Appolonians indeed valued the *amonle* covenant and were unlikely to renege on their arrangements. Together, Safohyenle Kabenla's and J. Y. Ackah's suppositions suggest that internal slave production in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Appolonia was likely non-existent, partly due to the influence of the amonle covenant.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to complicate our understanding of the transatlantic slave trade in the eighteenth- and the early nineteenth-century Gold Coast by looking at an important Gold Coast territory where the trade did not flourish. It uses Appolonia to show how the Gold Coast slave trade geography was more diverse and complex than scholars have acknowledged. The chapter establishes Appolonia as an outlier in the Gold Coast slave-trade economy throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Some contributing factors for Appolonia's outlier status include the relative lack of European presence in the kingdom, the minimal use of Fort Appolonia for slave trading, Appolonian leaders' disengagement from imperial projects, and the influence of socio-religious traditions like the *amonle* covenant. These findings reconsider

[461] Safohyenle Kabenla in an interview with the author, August 2022, in Atuabo.

received orthodoxies that suggest that Gold Coast port societies transformed into active sites of intensive slave trading during the zenith of the Atlantic slave trade. As this chapter reveals, not all port towns actively traded enslaved people.

Appolonia's outlier status reflects its minimal participation in the transatlantic slave trade. Such positionality also suggests the kingdom's relative insulation from incessant slave raids and kidnapping associated with the slave trade—a condition that afforded Appolonians relative *peace* throughout the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. With such condition in place, new migrants such as the Nzulezo people who came to Appolonia during the pinnacle of the slave trade were more likely to evade issues of insecurity. Once in Appolonia, other pertinent issues, including effective ways of assimilating into the Appolonian society, became critical. For the Nzulelzo people, it was more about how to construct an entirely new livelihood on water. Chapter next two sections, chapters four and five, focus on the Nzulezo people's life on the Amanzule River, examining their multifaceted relationships with the Amanzule waterscape and their dynamic and evolving survival mechanisms for living on the water.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Of Water and of Fire: Life, Survival, and Relationships on the Amanzule River

Chapters four and five examine how the pre-colonial Nzulezo population sustained themselves in the Amanzule ecology during the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century. The main focus is on how the pre-colonial Nzulezo community socially reproduced itself over time. While chapter five analyzes the people's socio-cultural, political, and economic systems and practices that contributed to the community's social reproduction, this chapter delves into the philosophical beliefs underlying the people's decision to remain in the Amanzule waterscape. These beliefs are evident in their oral histories, one of which is discussed below.

A popular tale exists in Nzulezo that speaks derisively of a man called Agya Bemea, an alleged trickster and resident of Megyina, a small Appolonian town northeast of the Nzulezo community. Bemea is said to have frequently tormented Nzulezo forebears with threats of burning their habitation and the Amanzule River if they did not give him their treasures, probably gold items.[462] He would arrive in Nzulezo in his dugout canoe carrying torches and demand their treasures with much impudence. The Nzulezo forebears reluctantly gave in to Bemea's demands for fear of losing their homes and access to the river. However, they grew tired of Bemea's constant threats and did not know what to do until one day, a Nzulezo child accidentally spilled soup and the blazing firewood used for cooking it into the river, which extinguished the fire. The child's mother immediately shared her discovery with the community.

[462] The present-day Nzulezo residents suggest that the Bemea story is a true historical incident, which occurred probably over 180 years ago. Maame Nda Aluah, Maame Adwoba Ezoa, Agya Kulu, and Agya Emuah, all Nzulezo residents in their eighties, explain that they learned about the Bemea incident from their parents, who did not witness the incident firsthand. It is, therefore, possible that these research collaborators' grandparents or those before them experienced the Bemea incident. Drawing on the ages of my research collaborators, their parents, and their grandparents to speculate on a possible period for this incident, we can assume that the parents and grandparents each lived about 50 years. Adding the sum of parents' and grandparents' ages (i.e., 100 years) to the average age of my research collaborators (i.e., 80 years) makes 180 years. This guesstimate, therefore, suggests that the alleged Bemea incident likely occurred about 180 years ago, placing the incident in the early 1840s.

Soon after, Bemea returned to Nzulezo with his usual demands, but this time, he was met with demands of his own. The angry Nzulezo crowd challenged Bemea to torch the river, and failing to do so, he received a severe beating from the people and never returned.[463]

The above story constitutes one of the many Nzulezo oral histories (lenses) that allow us to better appreciate the pre-colonial life of the Nzulezo people living on the Amanzule River. The story is less about Agya Bemea and more about the people's perception of and relationship with their ecological space. Why did the Nzulezo people choose to exchange their treasures for the continued opportunity to live on the Amanzule River? Were they so naïve or ill-informed about the relationship between water and fire—that water smothers fire? This chapter argues that the people's actions were neither informed by naïveté nor a wishful penchant to remain on the river. Instead, their resistance to Agya Bemea and other natural and human-induced threats was primarily informed by their deep understanding and complex relationship with the Amanzule waterscape, which we can only discern by analyzing how the present-day Nzulezo residents relate to the Amanzule ecology.

The current inhabitants of the Nzulezo community express their relationship with the Amanzule waterscape in two main ways. First, they conceptualize the Amanzule River, which is a male god called *Amanzule*, as a space of refuge and spiritual power; hence, they consider

[463] Akwasi Eba (a.k.a. Home Stay—in his late forties), Egya Ezoa (a.k.a Papa Ajasko—the Nzulezo linguist also in his late forties), Safohyenle Kwaku Pra and Auntie Adwoba Pra (wife of Kwaku Pra—both in their seventies), Aunties Adwoba Amihyia and Akaba Amihyia (sisters in their late seventies and residents of Beyin), Safohyenle Kwame (a 56-year-old Nzulezo royal), Maame Nda Aluah (a Nzulezo resident in her eighties and mother of Safohyenle Kwame), in multiple conversations with the author, the summers of 2018, 2021, and 2022, at Nzulezo, Beyin, and Ahumasuazo. Agya Bemea's story is very popular in Nzulezo and the surrounding towns, particularly Beyin and Ngelekazo. I first learned of the story in Beyin. Safohyenle Kwaku Pra and his wife Auntie Adwoba Pra, residents of Beyin, noted that in the 1970s and 1980s, when both research collaborators were elementary school pupils, the Bemea story was incorporated into the Nzema social studies curriculum at the Beyin Primary School. Although the story is currently out of the curriculum, it remains popular among several Beyin, Ngelekazo, and, particularly, Nzulezo people. The present-day Nzulezo residents explain that the Bemea incident was a real-life story, except that they do not know the specific historical period in which it happened.

themselves as residing in a secure location. Because the river is construed as a god, the people believe they "live in the belly of a god." Second, although a male god, the present-day Nzulezo people consider the Amanzule river and god a *mother* because they believe it demonstrates motherly affection and tendencies. For instance, they relate that the river god sheltered their ancestors and continues to protect and provide for them; and for this reason, they—as children—feel responsible for safeguarding the Amanzule ecology from any destruction—whether man-made or spiritual contamination.[464] This mother-child relationship and caregiving reciprocity encourage the current Nzulezo descendants to continue to live in the Amanzule waterscape. Drawing on the above beliefs, I argue that the pre-colonial Nzulezo ancestors have long held these tenets, which encouraged them to live in the middle of the Amanzule River despite facing unfavorable phenomena such as Agya Bemea's imposition and flooding.

Historicizing the shifting life of the Nzulezo forebears in mid-eighteenth century Appolonia and, mainly, on the Amanzule River, I heavily rely on oral traditions and scanty European written accounts to reimagine what could have possibly been the Nzulezo ancestors' reality. The sources suggest that the Nzulezo ancestors temporarily settled in a landlocked area within Appolonia before moving to the Amanzule River. This chapter explores this journey by identifying this terranean region and then tracing the evolution of the people's residency from the landlocked area to the Amanzule River. The chapter also looks at the stilt-house construction methods used by present-day Nzulezo descendants to imagine how the early settlers possibly built their stilt-house settlement on the river. Ultimately, the chapter delves into the possible reasons behind the Nzulezo ancestors' choice to live in the middle of the Amanzule River for close to a century—i.e., from the mid-1700s to the mid-1800s.

[464] Safohyenle Kwame, Agya Kulu, Arthur Ezoa Aka, Mary Eba, Adwoba Ezoa, and Joshua Ezoa in separate conversations with the author, July to August 2022, at Ahumasuazo and Nzulezo.

Of Land and of Water: The Evolution of the Nzulezo Early Settlements

As discussed in chapter two, the early Nzulezo settlers *negotiated* with the then Appolonian King Amihyia Kpanyinli for a place in his kingdom. Drawing on Henry Meredith's 1812 supposition that "the king (Amihyia Kpanyinli) allotted to them (i.e., the Nzulezo ancestors) a small spot of ground adjoining to the lake (the Amanzule River) but told them they must not build upon it (the land), but endeavor to erect houses in the lake," we can speculate that the "small spot of ground adjoining to the lake" probably constituted the Nzulezo forebears' first settlement location in mid-eighteenth-century Appolonia.[465] This conjecture is not out of place because realistically, the Nzulezo forebears would have required a temporary settlement location, which, practically, would have been a terranean ground, to plan and prepare building materials for creating their stilt-house village on the Amanzule River. The above logic, therefore, suggests that the Amanzule River was likely not the first and only place in Appolonia where the Nzulezo forebears resided.

No written historical records exist on this supposed initial place of settlement; however, competing oral traditions point to two possible sites, Gyamazu and Ahumasuazo, which lay north of the Amanzule River—see Figure 13 below. Agya Kulu, an 86-year-old male elder of the Nzulezo community, explains that Gyamazu could be the first settlement location because their great-grandparents cultivated farms there, which (the farms) were passed onto the descendants of the Nzulezo community.[466] Born and raised in Nzulezo, Kulu is one of the oldest members of the Nzulezo community and royal council, an advisory body to the Nzulezo chief, Nana Takrika VII. Additionally, Kulu holds a position on the royal advisory body of the Western Nzema

[465] Henry Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa; with a Brief History of the African Company.* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1812), 53.
[466] Agya Kulu in an interview with the author, August 2022, in Nzulezo.

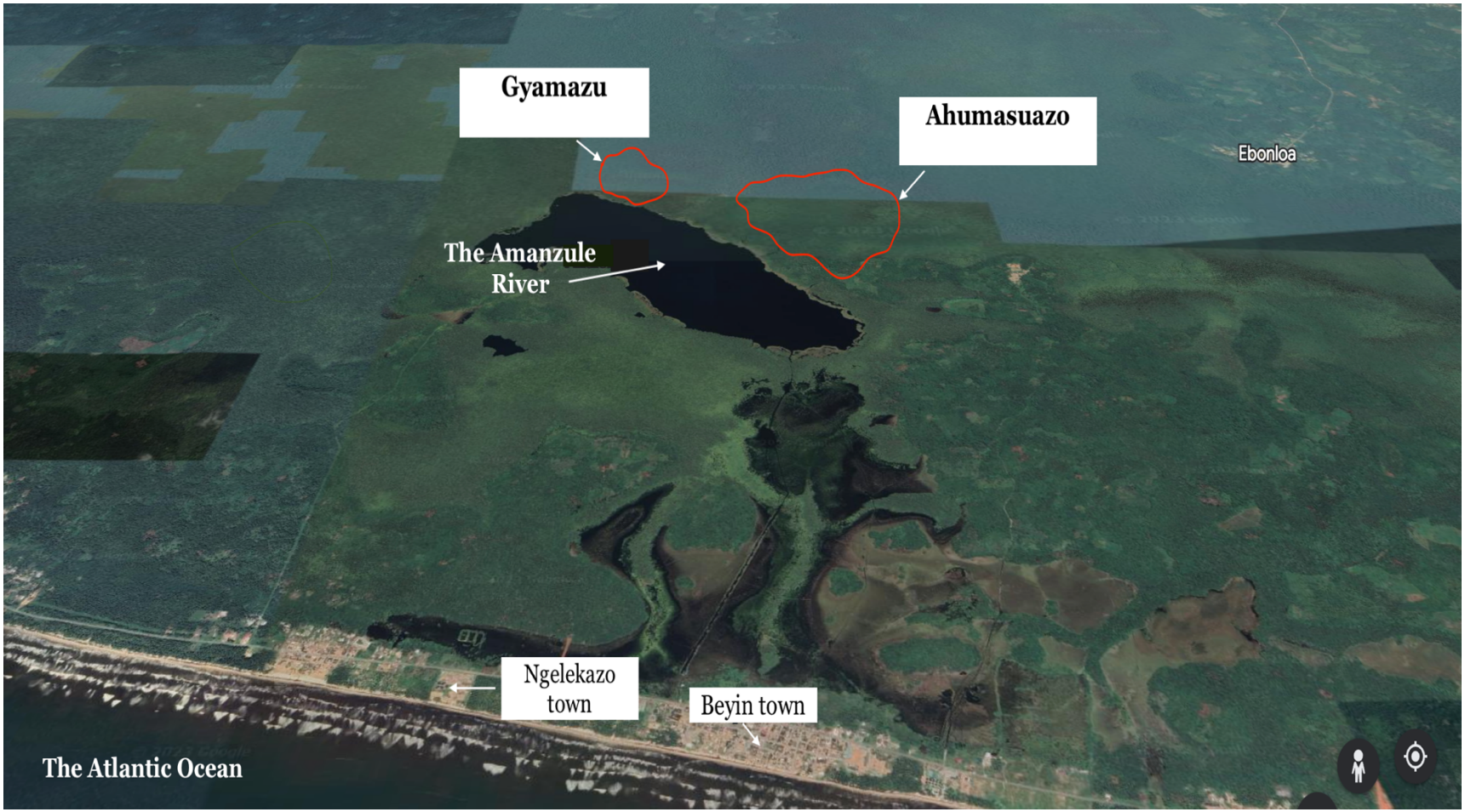
paramountcy, the largest chieftain unit in Western Nzema (formerly Western Appolonia), a chieftain unit responsible for governing about twenty-five towns, including Beyin, Ngelekazo, and Nzulezo. As a council member, Kulu advises the paramount chief of Western Nzema, Awulae Annor Adjaye II, on chieftain matters and history.[467] Given his position as an advisor to both Nana Trikrika VII and Awulae Annor Adjaye II, and, importantly, his eighty-six-years life experience in Nzulezo, which might have afforded him opportunities of learning Nzulezo traditions and cultural practices, Kulu is an ideal source for studying Nzulezo's past.

According to Kulu, the Gyamazu village was once an untamed forest solely occupied by a deity called *gyamazu*—the Gyamazu village was probably named after the deity. The *gyamazu* deity is described as a powerful, ferocious, and unforgiving male god. Kulu explains that their great-grandparents, possibly the early Nzulezo settlers, constructed a *relationship* with the deity by frequently offering animal (chicken and sheep) sacrifices to him, which allowed the people to cultivate farms in the Gyamazu village. Agya Kulu believes that their forebears' ability to develop farms in that village suggests that Gyamazu was likely their first place of settlement in Appolonia.[468]

Contrary to Kulu's story, the 56-year-old *Safohyenle* Kwame, another esteemed elder of the Nzulezo community, believes that Ahumasuazo might have been the first area that King Amihyia Kpanyinli allotted to the Nzulezo ancestors.[469] *Safohyenle*—whose Twi and Fante variants are *ɔsa hene* and *safo hen*, respectively—is a royal title for war chiefs or leaders.[470] Occupants of this royal office do not only lead communities to war but also advise chiefs and

[467] Ibid.
[468] Agya Kulu in an interview with the author, August 2022, at Nzulezo.
[469] Safohyenle Kwame in an interview with the author, August 2022, at Ahumasuazo.
[470] Safohyenle Kwame of Nzulezo, Safohyenle Kabena of Atuabo town, and Safohyenle Kwaku Pra of Beyin, in interviews with the author, June 2018 and August 2022, at Ahumasuazo, Atuabo, and Beyin.

Figure 13: A Google Earth Image Showing the Locations of Gyamazu and Ahumasuazo



Copyright: the author adapted the image from Google Earth. The image shows an aerial view of the Amanzule River, which, at first glance, appears as a lake. However, the river flows eastward through the adjoining vegetation and empties itself into the Atlantic Ocean in the Appolonian town of Bakanta. North of the Amanzule River lay the Gyamazu and Ahumasuazo towns. The Amanzule River is about 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) away from Beyin, the pre-colonial capital of the Appolonian Kingdom, and roughly 3 kilometers (1.9 miles) from the Atlantic Sea—these estimates were obtained using Google Maps.

decide on their appointment, installation, and destoolment.[471] For their critical position in the community, all *safohyenle* are schooled in the traditions and customs of the society. Therefore, like John Arthur, the official Nzulezo oral historian whom I briefly discuss in chapter one, Safohyenle Kwame can be perceived as a living "historical archive."[472] It is, therefore, against this backdrop should Safohyenle Kwame's supposition be interpreted.

Also born and raised in Nzulezo but currently residing in Ahumasuazo, Safohyenle Kwame espouses that their ancestors initially occupied the uninhabited Ahumasuazo village and constructed farms there before ultimately resettling on the Amanzule River.[473] Kwame's mother, Nda Aluah, who was present during our conversation, supported her son's claim. Nda Aluah is in her late eighties, and, like Agya Kulu, she has lived in the Nzulezo community all her life. Nda Aluah and Safohyenle Kwame maintain that Ahumasuazo presently serves as a second home to the Nzulezo people, which is why it is currently known as "Nzulezo Number Two" and contains several Nzulezo farms and a relatively larger Nzulezo population than those living on the Amanzule River.[474] For these reasons, Nda Aluah and Safohyenle Kwame are convinced that Ahumasuazo was likely the first temporary settlement of the Nzulezo ancestors.[475]

The suppositions of Agya Kulu, Safohyenle Kwame, and Nda Aluah suggest that King Amihyia probably gave the northerly lands adjoining the Amanzule River, which covers the

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[471] Safohyenle Kwame, Safohyenle Kabena, and Safohyenle Kwaku Pra, Mr. Amihyia (abusua kpanyinle [family head] of the Ndwea ruling family of Western Nzema), Mr. Samuel Assyne (a resident of Beyin and a former local government representative [Assemblyman] of Jomoro Constituency, Western Nzema), Safohyenle Kabena (a war chief of Atuabo), in separate interviews with the author, July to August 2022, at Ahumasuazo, Atuabo, and Beyin.
[472] I have adopted the term "historical archive" from Dele Layiwola's concept of "living libraries." This idea suggests that elderly African individuals are valuable sources of historical knowledge. Dr. Layiwola is a cultural studies expert at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria. See Dele Layiwola, *A Handbook of Methodologies of African Studies* (Pittsburgh, PA: Dorrance Publishing, 2010), ix.
[473] Safohyenle Kwame in an interview with the author, August 2022, at Ahumasuazo. Maame Nda Aluah and Agya Emuah, both are Nzulezo residents in their eighties, support Safohyenle Kwame's claim.
[474] Safohyenle Kwame and Nda Aluah in an interview with the author, August 2022, at Ahumasuazo.
[475] Ibid.

Gyamazu and Ahumasuazo villages, to the early Nzulezo settlers. By the mid-eighteenth century, when the Nzulezo ancestors came to Appolonia, the northern banks of the Amanzule River must have been heavily forested and uninhabited, as Safohyenle Kwame indicates. Given the absence of human settlement in this area, the early Nzulezo settlers must have constructed their first temporary settlement at Ahumasuazo while making Gyamazu their primary farming location. This interpretation helps clarify why presently, Ahumasuazo serves as a second home to the present-day Nzulezo residents while Gyamazu remains a farming area.

If the above logic were the Nzulezo ancestors' reality, then Ahumasuazo would have constituted the location where the people planned and prepared building materials to create their stilt-house settlement on the Amanzule River. Due to the lack of historical sources, we do not have specific information about the Nzulezo ancestors' building activities in Ahumasuazo or the length of their stay there. Henry Meredith, however, provides glimpses into the mid-eighteenth-century world of the Nzulezo ancestors, stating in his 1812 account that "necessity thus obliged them (Nzulezo people) to exert all the ingenuity and art they were masters of and after much labour, they succeeded in forming comfortable and secure houses of wood, chiefly of the bamboo cane."[476] It is crucial to note that Meredith repeatedly precedes his account with the phrase "it is reported," suggesting that he never visited the Nzulezo community.[477] His awareness of the Nzulezo stilt-house settlement, therefore, must have come from contemporaneous eyewitnesses from Appolonia, whose identities remain unknown.

Meredith's alleged secondhand account suggests that by 1812, when his posthumous

[476] Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa*, 53-54.
[477] Henry Meredith is not widely covered in history. The scant information on him, which is chronicled in his *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa*, published in 1812, suggests that he served as the commander of Fort Winneba and, later, became the Governor of the British settlements on the Gold Coast during the late 1700s and early 1800s. Meredith was murdered by some local Gold Coasters in 1811. See the introduction of Meredith's manuscript.

manuscript was published, the Nzulezo people had built their stilt-house village on the Amanzule River. This reasoning implies that the Nzulezo ancestors possibly created their stilt-house settlement sometime between the mid-eighteenth century (when they arrived in Appolonia) and the first twelve years of the nineteenth century. While Meredith acknowledges the arduous nature of the Nzulezo forebears' construction work, his report surely fails to capture the nuances and complexities of the people's creativity, perseverance, and potential casualties associated with riverine stilt-house construction. Nonetheless, oral testimonies from the present-day Nzulezo people shed light on their ancestors' experiences in building stilt houses in the eighteenth century. I discuss some of these oral accounts below.

Nzulezo Construction Work: Its Nature and Evolution

Throughout my one-and-a-half years of ethnographic research in the Nzulezo community from 2017 to 2022, I never witnessed the construction of stilt houses. However, oral testimonies from some Nzulezo residents, including those who engage in this work, suggest that building activities in Nzulezo have traditionally been dominated by men.[478] My research collaborators, including Safohyenle Kwame, Agya Kulu, Arthur Ezoa Aka (a Nzulezo wood sculptor in his mid-forties), John Arthur (the appointed Nzulezo oral historian), Rockson Ndayimah (in his late twenties), Joshua Ezoa (the Nzulezo linguist in his forties), and Agya Yaw Hunamgbule (an elder of Nzulezo in his eighties), all of whom have previously engaged in the construction work, confirmed that Nzulezo men plan, procure building materials, and carry out the stilt-house construction.[479] They also explained that this practice had been passed down from their fathers

[478] Safohyenle Kwame, Agya Kulu, Arthur Ezoa Aka, Mary Eba, Adwoba Ezoa, and Joshua Ezoa in separate conversations with the author, July to August 2022, at Ahumasuazo and Nzulezo.
[479] Safohyenle Kwame, Agya Kulu, John Arthur, Rockson Ndayimah, Arthur Ezoa Aka, Joshua Ezoa, and Agya Yaw Hunamgbule in separate interviews with the author, July to August 2022, at Ahumasuazo and Nzulezo.

and grandfathers who built stilt houses in Nzulezo.[480] Therefore, it can be surmised that the male-dominated nature of the Nzulezo construction work is likely a historical continuity from the mid-eighteenth century. It is possible that the first Nzulezo stilt-house village was constructed by their male ancestors, who passed down this practice to their descendants.

Speaking with some Nzulezo women about why females largely remain invisible in the construction work, Nda Aluah, Safohyenle Kwame's mother, Mary Eba (in her mid-forties), Tanoe Ehwiya (in her late seventies), and Adwoba Ezoa (also in her eighties; the mother to Joshua Ezoa, the Nzulezo linguist), explain that this task is considered *mmarima adwuma* (a males' work) because it requires a lot of physical effort and can be dangerous.[481] Adwoba Ezoa's, Mary Eba's, Nda Aluah's, and Tanoe Ehwiya's views support what my male research collaborators had stipulated, highlighting the sexual divisions and gendered nature of the construction work in Nzulezo.

Contextualizing the Sexual Divisions of Labor in the Nzulezo Construction Work

It is relevant to distinguish between "sex" and "gender" as they applied to pre-colonial African (and Nzulezo's) divisions of labor. African(ist) gender scholars, including Christine Saidi, Oyeronke Oyewumi, Ifi Amaduime, and Nwando Achebe, have differentiated gender from sex in pre-colonial Africa, explicating that sex represented the categorizations of human beings into women and men, strictly along biological lines—i.e., society's classifications of people as being either women or men because of their peculiar biological features and capabilities, including the ability to give birth, possess a breast, or penis.[482] By contrast, gender was a socially

[480] Ibid.
[481] Adwoba Ezoa, Nda Aluah, Mary Eba, and Tanoe Ehwiya in separate conversations with the author, August 2022, at Ahumasuazo and Nzulezo.
[482] Christine Saidi, "Women in Precolonial Africa," Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History, October 27, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.259; Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (London; Atlantic Highlands, N.J: Zed Books, 1987), 15-17; Nwando Achebe,

constructed category that depicted women as not inferior to men based on their biological sex, and men as not innately superior to women because of their biological anatomy.[483]

The biological (sexual) and social (gender) differentiations between women and men shaped occupational organizations and labor divisions in most indigenous African societies. Anthropologists Judith Brown, as well as Michael Burton and his team of researchers, espouse that in most indigenous peasant societies in Africa, men were often assigned tasks that involved danger and distant excursions, such as hunting and long-distance trade, while women tended to perform lower-risk tasks closer to home, such as subsistence farming.[484] They further suggest that these divisions were primarily based on biological differences, as men were typically better equipped for "dangerous" occupations while women were suited for the less-dangerous ones.[485] Africanist gender scholars like Niara Sudarkasa, Nwando Achebe, and Jane Guyer have challenged Brown and Burton et al.'s thesis, arguing that such proposition was not entirely accurate for most African societies.

Historian Niara Sudarkasa argues that pre-colonial Yoruba women have historically been local and long-distant traders within and beyond the Yoruba society (of present-day southwestern

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Farmers, Traders, Warriors, and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900-1960 (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005), 14-15; Oyeronke Oyewumi, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*, 1 edition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 35-37; Eugenia W. Herbert, *Iron, Gender, and Power: Rituals of Transformation in African Societies* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 19.

[483] Ibid. For further readings, see Susan Kent, *Gender in African Prehistory* (New York, NY: Rowman Altamira, 2000); Iris Berger, "African Women's History: Themes and Perspectives," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 4, no. 1 (2003); Iris Berger and E. Frances White, *Women in Sub-Saharan Africa: Restoring Women to History* (Indiana University Press, 1999); Onaiwu W. Ogbomo, *When Men and Women Mattered: A History of Gender Relations Among the Owan of Nigeria* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1997); Christine Saidi, *Women's Authority and Society in Early East-Central Africa*, vol. 44 (Boydell & Brewer, 2010).

[484] See Judith K. Brown, "A Note on the Division of Labor by Sex," *American Anthropologist* 72, no. 5 (1970): 1073–78; Michael Burton, Lilyan Brudner, and Douglas White, "A Model of the Sexual Division of Labor," *American Ethnologist* 4 (1977): 227–52.

[485] Ibid.

Nigeria), often performing the latter in trade caravans.[486] She further maintains that "women engaged in local and long distance trade because of [their] degree of specialization in the exchange of goods and because most of the men of the society were otherwise engaged in farming and in warfare activities."[487] Historian Nwando Achebe also discusses pre-colonial Igbo women's enterprising in long-distance trade, which contributed to their socio-economic upward mobility in the society.[488] Comparing the labor divisions in agricultural production in Beti society of present-day south-central Cameroon and Yoruba society, anthropologist Jane Guyer demonstrates that the emergence of cocoa production in colonial Beti and Yoruba attracted both men and women to this labor-intensive work, allowing both parties to work side-by-side.[489] These examples contradict Brown and Burton et al,'s idea of strict sexual divisions of labor in indigenous African societies. They also illuminate the fluidity and complexity of women's position and work practices across pre-colonial and colonial Africa.

While Brown and Burton et al.'s theory may not apply to several indigenous African societies, it seems to give clarity to the male-female work practices in home construction in the pre-colonial and present-day Nzulezo community. Nzulezo oral histories indicate that divisions of labor in pre-colonial and present-day Nzulezo, specifically in the realm of stilt-house construction, have been strictly delineated along sexual lines. That is, Nzulezo men are exclusively responsible for building stilt houses and related tasks, such as canoe making, due to

[486] Niara Sudarkasa, *Where Women Work: A Study of Yoruba Women in the Marketplace and in the Home* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Museum of Anthropological Archaeology, 1973), 1, 30-35, https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.11394926.
[487] Ibid, 35.
[488] Achebe, *Farmers, Traders, Warriors, and Kings*, 32-39.
[489] Jane I. Guyer, "Food, Cocoa, and the Division of Labour by Sex in Two West African Societies," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, no. 3 (1980): 355–73.

their physical strength and skill.[490] Below, I will delve into how the present-day Nzulezo men construct stilt houses and use that information to speculate on how the mid-eighteenth century Nzulezo settlers may have built their stilt-house village on the Amanzule River.

The Stilt-house Construction Materials and Process

The construction of buildings in present-day Nzulezo is a collective work performed by both male teenagers and older adults.[491] These builders work together to identify a suitable location on the water, preferably a shallow area, where a proposed house would be erected. According to Agya Yaw Hunamgbule, John Arthur, and Joshua Ezoa, about fifteen males can actively construct a stilt house within two weeks to a month, provided there are no obstacles such as rip currents (i.e., strong and dangerous water tides) or a lack of building materials.[492]

Arthur Ezoa Aka, the woodcarver who specializes in building canoes, wooden sculptors, and stilt houses in Nzulezo, explains that about seven different kinds of lumber, including *Azobe*, *Evunli*, *Ewumazinli*, *Kaku*, and *Tonli*—these are the local (Nzema) names—are used to build stilt houses in Nzulezo.[493] Among these lumbers, *Azobe* (also known as *Akoga* or *Bongossi*) is the most popular wood.[494] *Azobe*, whose basionyms (i.e., original botanical names) are *Lophira procera* or *Lophira alata*, are native to the Appolonian region and grow in the forested Ahumasuazo and Gyamazu areas.[495] Historian Raymond Dumett classifies the Appolonian

[490] I received this information from my research collaborators. See footnotes 14-17 above. These research collaborators, particularly the women, emphasized that Nzulezo men's overt visibility in the stilt-house construction work does not, in any way, translate to their superiority to Nzulezo women. In other domains, including the Nzulezo religious and economic life, Nzulezo women and men share responsibilities, co-construct "gender," and work together to reproduce the Nzulezo community. I discuss some of these domains in the ensuing chapter.
[491] Agya Yaw Hunamgbule, John Arthur, and Arthur Ezoa Aka in multiple interviews with the author, July to August 2022, at Nzulezo.
[492] Ibid.
[493] Arthur Ezoa Aka in an interview with the author, August 2022, at Nzulezo.
[494] Ibid.
[495] Ibid. For scientific facts on *Azobe*, see Rick-Léonid Ngoua Meye Misso et al., "Phytochemical Screening, Antioxidant, Anti-Inflammatory and Antiangiogenic Activities of Lophira Procera A. Chev. (Ochnaceae) Medicinal Plant from Gabon," *Egyptian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences* 5, no. 1 (2017): 80–86; G.H.J. Fransen,

territory as a constituent of the West African tropical high forest zone, an ecological area containing different types of timber ranging "up to 200 feet in height and with trunks up to 15 feet in circumference."[496] *Azobe* is one such timber. A strong and highly durable lumber, *Azobe* is used in heavy-duty construction work such as railroad crossties, harbor work like jetties, and heavy-duty flooring.[497] In Nzulezo, *Azobe* is primarily used for making pillars for stilt houses and planks for walkways, which can last between twenty-five to thirty years.[498]

The introduction of *Azobe* to the Nzulezo construction work is, however, recent. Arthur Ezoa Aka explains that in 2008, a Spanish man who attempted to build a house in Nzulezo introduced the community to *Azobe*.[499] Prior to *Azobe*'s introduction in the Nzulezo stilt-house construction, the Nzulezo people used the *Evunli* or *Ewumazinli* lumber for making pillars.[500] *Evunli* and *Ewumazinli* are also giant timbers, which grow in the Gyamazu and Ahumasuazo forest region.[501] Unable to identify their specific botanic genus or species, the *Evunli* or *Ewumazinli* are suspected of belonging to the *Khaya ivoriensis*, also known as African Mahogany. This assumption is based on the facts that African Mahogany, like the *Azobe* (*Lophira procera*), grow in the Ahumasuazo and Gyamazu region and are commonly used for making dugout canoes, furniture, and other heavy-duty woodworks, which aligns with the current Nzulezo residents' use of the *Evunli* and *Ewumazinli* trees—the people construct dugout canoes and wooden pillars and planks for their bridges and stilt houses from the *Evunli* and

"Behaviour of Azobé (Lophira Alata) in Compression Perpendicular to Grain" (M.A. Thesis, Eindhoven, Netherlands, Eindhoven University of Technology, 2016).

[496] Raymond E. Dumett, "Tropical Forests and West African Enterprise: The Early History of the Ghana Timber Trade," *African Economic History*, no. 29 (2001), 82.

[497] Fransen, "Behaviour of Azobé (Lophira Alata) in Compression Perpendicular to Grain," 3.

[498] Arthur Ezoa Aka in an interview with the author, August 2022, at Nzulezo.

[499] Ibid.

[500] Ibid.

[501] Arthur Ezoa Aka, Egya Kulu, Joshua Ezoa, Akwasi Eba, Nda Enyima, and James Adiebe (all of whom are residents of Nzulezo and have participated in the stilt-house construction work) in multiple interviews with the author, July to August 2022, at Nzulezo.

Ewumazinli trees.[502] Unlike pillars made of *Azobe*, the *Evunli* and *Ewumazinli* wooden pillars can sustain a stilt house for about seven to eight years.[503]

Considering that the use of *Azobe* in the Nzulezo construction work is relatively recent and that the *Evunli* and *Ewumazinli* timbers also grow in the Ahumasuazo and Gyamazu areas, it is likely that the mid-eighteenth century Nzulezo settlers used *Evunli* and *Ewumazinli* for making canoes and wooden pillars for their first stilt-house settlement. Conceivably, relatively large and sharp iron tools, notably axes and hatchets, would have been used to fell and repurpose the giant *Evunli* and *Ewumazinli* timbers into canoes and long wooden pillars. African historian Akosua Perbi maintains that by the second half of the eighteenth century, such iron tools were relatively accessible to several Akan societies, including Appolonia.[504] However, given the Nzulezo ancestor's supposed position as "disaffected" newcomers in mid-eighteenth-century Appolonia, whom King Amihyia allegedly separated from the general Appolonian populace, it is imaginable that the early Nzulezo settlers may not have possessed or readily accessed many of these large and sharp iron tools (axes and hatchets) for constructing their stilt houses. Such an accessibility problem would have hindered the people from procuring and repurposing many *Evunli* and *Ewumazinli* timbers for their construction work. Therefore, circumventing this logistical problem, the mid-eighteenth century Nzulezo builders would have relied on other building materials, including bamboo canes, twines, and twigs, that seemed relatively easy to cut down and repurpose using simple iron tools like cutlasses—this supposition dovetails with Meredith's

[502] Arthur Ezoa Aka, Egya Kulu, Joshua Ezoa, Akwasi Eba, Nda Enyima, and James Adiebe in multiple interviews with the author, July to August 2022, at Nzulezo. For readings on the African Mahogany and its utility, see Dumett, "Tropical Forests and West African Enterprise," 82; Ghana Forestry Commission, "Ghana Forestry Commission - Ghana Wood Products, Timber Products - Species," accessed November 23, 2022, https://www.ghanatimber.org/species.php?page=0&sort=&search=&order=asc.
[503] Arthur Ezoa Aka, Egya Kulu, Joshua Ezoa, Akwasi Eba, Nda Enyima, and James Adiebe in multiple interviews with the author, July to August 2022, at Nzulezo.
[504] Akosua Adoma Perbi, *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana from the 15th to the 19th Century*, 1st Edition edition (Legon, Accra, Ghana: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2004), 78.

observation.

According to Meredith's 1812 account, the early Nzulezo settlers "succeeded in forming comfortable and secure houses of wood, chiefly of the bamboo cane."[505] Scientifically considered a grass, bamboos (botanical name: *Bambusa*) are relatively weaker and thinner than the *Evunli* and *Ewumazinli* trees and, therefore, would not have necessarily required larger iron tools to cut down. On the contrary, the bamboo cane's weaker and thinner structure renders it a not-so-durable material for constructing the building's pillars.[506] Based on this logic, we can assume that the early Nzulezo builders likely created wooden pillars from the *Evunli* and *Ewumazinli* trees while using bamboo canes to construct the building's superstructure—that is, the upper section of the house that sits on the stilt pillars.

Popularly known as the "poor man's timber," bamboos commonly grow in or near wet ecologies because their unique quality of storing water in their rhizomes and stems allows for their remarkable growth and regeneration in such wet environments.[507] It is conceivable that bamboos grew in abundance along the northern banks of the Amanzule River, where the Ahumasuazo and Gyamazu villages lay. The mid-eighteenth century Nzulezo builder must have harvested the bamboos to construct their stilt-house village on the Amanzule River. Conceived so, the people most likely joined multiple bamboo canes with twines to create doors, flooring, and walls for the building's superstructure while roofing the superstructure with thatch or wood shingles.

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[505] Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa*, 53-54.
[506] For readings on bamboo, see Lucina Yeasmin et al., "Bamboo: An Overview on Its Genetic Diversity and Characterization," *3 Biotech* 5, no. 1 (2015): 1; Abdul Khalil, "An Overview of Bamboo Research and Scientific Discoveries," in *Bamboo - Current and Future Prospects* (IntechOpen, 2018), https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.77094.
[507] Yeasmin et al., "Bamboo."

The Eighteenth-century Building Process: Reimagined

My research collaborators have no specific memories of how their mid-eighteenth-century ancestors constructed the first stilt-house settlement on the Amanzule River. However, they suggest that their strategies of building stilt houses in present-day Nzulezo could not be any significantly different from their forebears', thereby making the Nzulezo descendants' construction practices a perfect analytical lens for reimagining how the pre-colonial Nzulezo ancestors created their first stilt-house village.

Nzulezo builders, including Safohyenle Kwame, Agya Kulu, Arthur Ezoa Aka, Rockson Ndayimah, Joshua Ezoa, and John Arthur, suggest that building constructions are often carried out in the dry season (harmattan) when there is limited rainfall and the water levels are relatively low.[508] The building process begins with erecting pillars.[509] These research collaborators explain that experienced male swimmers are required to dive into the Amanzule River to assess the nature of the riverbed, which will hold the pillars.[510] The slope, depth, and the hardness or softness of the riverbed inform how the pillars would be positioned in the water. My research collaborators indicate that a minimum of sixteen wooden pillars, roughly fashioned in 4 X 4-inch sizes, are required to support a one-bedroom house, measuring approximately seventeen square feet, which is the standard house size in present-day Nzulezo.[511] Thus, the swimmers dig sixteen or more holes, usually of a few inches deep and about four feet apart.

While the swimmers prepare the riverbed for the pillars, about ten to fifteen Nzulezo men

[508] Safohyenle Kwame, Agya Kulu, Arthur Ezoa Aka, Rockson Ndayimah, Joshua Ezoa, and John Arthur in multiple conversations with the author, July to August 2022, at Nzulezo and Ahumasuazo.
[509] Ibid.
[510] Ibid.
[511] Arthur Ezoa Aka, Akwasi Aka, Joshua Ezoa, and Rockson Ndayimah in multiple conversations with the author, July to August 2022, at Nzulezo.

carry the sixteen or more wooden pillars in their canoes atop the river.[512] Erecting the pillars involves the canoe-borne workers dipping one end of each pillar into the water, which the swimmers carefully direct into the holes created in the riverbed. The workers stationed above the

Figure 14: *Azobe* Pillars Projecting above the Water Surface

Copyright: the author received this image from Baba Moro, one of his research assistants who resides in Beyin. Moro suggests that these *Azobe* pillars were built in February 2022, during the harmattan, when the water level was shallow. As observed from the image, several raffia palm plants had been felled, and their branches spread upon the river's surface.

river then hammer down the pillars from above the water until they hold firmly in the hole. Throughout this process, the divers frequently ascend the river to receive fresh air and offer directions on their work beneath the water. To ensure the stability of the building, the workers shake the pillars from above the water surface with much intensity to confirm that they are

[512] Safohyenle Kwame, Agya Kulu, Arthur Ezoa Aka, Rockson Ndayimah, Joshua Ezoa, and John Arthur in multiple conversations with the author, July to August 2022, at Nzulezo and Ahumasuazo.

sturdily positioned and can withstand any pressure. This process is repeated until all sixteen (or more) pillars are erected.[513] Arthur Ezoa Aka and Akwasi Aka, another Nzulezo wood sculptor in his late thirties, caution that this construction process can be dangerous, especially for the swimmers who are at risk of suffocation or drowning.[514]

The above work sequence is onerous, precarious, and time-consuming, offering a glimpse of how the eighteenth-century Nzulezo forebears gruelingly labored in their construction work. Nonetheless, the building of pillars constitutes only the initial phase of the construction process. Safohyenle Kwame, Agya Kulu, Arthur Ezoa Aka, Rockson Ndayimah, Joshua Ezoa, and John Arthur explain that once the pillars are firmly mounted, the next task is to build a floorboard using woods like *Tonli* and *Ngbunla*, which grow in the Gyamazu and Ahumasuazo forests.[515] The floorboard serves as the building's flooring and foundation for its superstructure. Once procured, the *Tonli* and *Ngbunla* lumbers are carved into 2x4- or 4x4-inch planks and joined with nails to form the floorboard, which is then nailed to the erected pillars projecting above the water surface.[516] It is important to mention that nails are an essential material in the stilt-house construction work in present-day Nzulezo. However, it is possible that during the mid-eighteenth century, their use in the Nzulezo building construction was likely rare or even absent. This may be because the Nzulezo ancestors were newcomers and probably a minoritized group in mid-eighteenth century Appolonia, with limited access to iron materials. Therefore, in lieu of nails, the Nzulezo ancestors might have used twines to secure their floorboards to the pillars.[517]

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[513] Ibid.
[514] Arthur Ezoa Aka and Akwasi Aka in conversations with the author, August 2022, at Nzulezo.
[515] John Arthur in an interview with the author, August 2022, at Nzulezo.
[516] Arthur Ezoa Aka and Akwasi Aka in conversations with the author, August 2022, at Nzulezo.
[517] These claims are based on speculations because there are no written historical sources that discusses the pre-colonial Nzulezo home construction. Architect Joseph Pierterson, who examines the present-day Nzulezo stilt-house construction does not engage with the pre-colonial construction process. See Joseph Pierterson, "Safeguarding Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: Nzulezo Stilt Construction" (M.A., Budapest, Central European University, 2018).

Once the floorboard is securely installed, the present-day Nzulezo builders create vertical pillars on each corner and at the center of the floorboard by nailing additional 4 X 4-square-inch planks from the *Tonli* and *Ngbunla* trees to it. They then attach more *Tonli* and *Ngbunla* planks horizontally across the vertical pillars to create a scaffold to which the *Ntonto* wood is fastened. The *Ntonto* are dry palm branches, specifically, the spine of the branches. Figures 16 below displays a Nzulezo house structure with *Ntonto* and the *Tonli* and *Ngbunla* planks while Figures 17 and 18 below show completed stilt houses in present-day Nzulezo. The Nzulezo people tack multiple *Ntonto* together with nails to create wooden walls, windows, and doors, which are also nailed to the scaffold to form the building's superstructure. The building is ultimately roofed with either thatch or Aluminum sheet. While aluminum roofing sheets feature predominantly in present-day Nzulezo stilt houses, it is predictable that such material was not present in mid-eighteenth century Nzulezo because aluminum roofs were invented in western Europe in the 1830s and was introduced on the Gold Coast in the twentieth century.[518] The foregoing fact serves to support the above supposition that the mid-eighteenth-century Nzulezo builders likely roofed their stilt houses with thatch or wood shingles.

[518] For readings on aluminum roofing, see Stephen Agyei, Kofi Owusu-Sekyere, and Mark Adu Gyamfi, "Studying Corrosion Resistance of Different Roofing Sheets in Ghana," *Diyala Journal of Engineering Sciences*, 2022, 44; Kumator Taku, "Comparative Study of Some Engineering Properties of Aluminium Roof Sheets Manufactured In Nigeria and China," *International Journal Of Engineering And Computer Science* 4, no. 5 (May 2015): 12076.

Figure 15: A Nzulezo House Structure Showing the Floorboard and Scaffold

Copyright: the author received this photo from Baba Moro. Figure 15 illustrates a superstructure of an Nzulezo stilt house with a *Tonli* and *Ngbunla* planks as floorboards and scaffold. The woods tacked to the left section of the scaffold are *Ntonto*. This stilt house currently serves as a church building for the Church of Pentecost in Nzulezo.

Figure 16: The Church of Pentecost at Nzulezo

Copyright: photo taken by the author in August 2022. This is the completed house from Figure 15. Except for the flooring, the painted section of the house is chiefly made of *Ntonto*.

Figure 17: Internal Design of an Nzulezo Stilt House

Copyright: photo taken by the author in June 2018 and used with the permission of the house owner. As observed, this house is furnished with amenities, including comfortable sofas, television, and a wall cabinet.

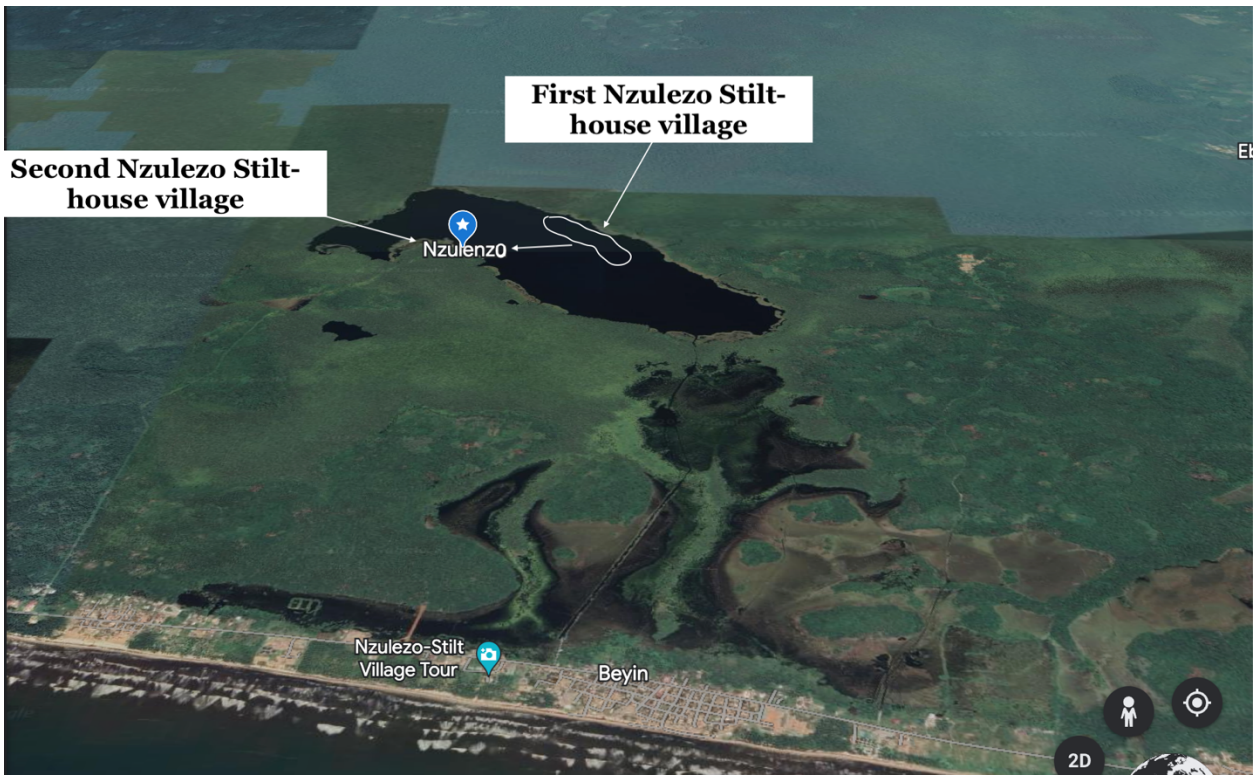
Of Fire and of Water: The Nzulezo Built Environment and Its Evolution

From the above images, particularly Figure 15, it is discernible that the *Ntonto* constitute a crucial building material in the construction of Nzulezo stilt houses. They primarily make up the significant parts of the building's superstructure. It is believed that the *Ntonto* replaced the bamboo cane which was used by earlier settlers.[519] Agya Kulu, the 86-year-old Nzulezo royal and certainly one of the elderly residents still alive, explains that growing up in Nzulezo, he never witnessed the use of bamboo canes in the Nzulezo construction work. Nevertheless, he recalls their parents' and grandparents' discussions of bamboo canes in relation to fire outbreaks in the community.[520] "Fire outbreak on the Amanzule River?!", with a surprised stare, I probed. Agya Kulu elaborated that:

[519] Agya Kulu in an interview with the author, August 2022, at Nzulezo.
[520] Ibid.

Our forebears initially built their houses near the northern banks of the Amanzule River. (Pointing his right index finger toward the Gyamazu and Ahumasuazo area, Kulu continued…) as you can see, that area is expansive and open to the wind. The wind is very strong over there. When you are fishing in that area, it sometimes feels like the wind would capsize your canoe. When our ancestors lived over there, the strong wind [gust] troubled them. Whenever they kindled fire to cook or illumine their environment, the gust easily inflamed the fire. Because their houses (i.e., the superstructure of their stilt houses) were chiefly made of bamboo canes, especially the dry ones, the inflamed fire easily set their buildings ablaze, leaving severe infrastructural and human casualties in its wake.[521]

Figure 18: A Google Earth Image Showing the Early Nzulezo Settlement Location



Copyright: the author adapted this image from Google Earth. It displays the locations of the first and second

[521] Ibid.

Figure 18 (cont'd) Nzulezo stilt-house settlements on the Amanzule River.

Other research collaborators, including the chief of Nzulezo, Nana Takrika VII, John Arthur (the Nzulezo oral historian), Agya Emuah (a Nzulezo elder in his eighties), Safohyenle Kwame, and his mother, Nda Aluah, a contemporary of Agya Kulu, all confirmed the story of Agya Kulu.[522] They further explained that due to frequent fire eruptions in the pre-colonial Nzulezo stilt-house settlement, their ancestors built their houses at a distance from each other to prevent the spread of the fire. Although they could not determine the exact time in history when this fire problem occurred, Henry Meredith's 1812 account validates their supposition. Meredith wrote that the early Nzulezo houses were "separated from each other, so that every house [was] insulated. The inhabitants form(ed) a communication by means of canoes."[523] What could the Nzulezo ancestors be insulating themselves from? Possibly, the fire outbreaks, which must have occurred multiple times between the mid-eighteenth century and 1812—the period that possibly witnessed the creation of the first Nzulezo stilt-house settlement.

Indeed, the fire problem in the first Nzulezo stilt-house village must have been significantly detrimental to warrant the creation of a dispersed settlement layout. For the fire's alleged frequency and significant impacts on the old Nzulezo community, it would not be farfetched to describe the pre-colonial Nzulezo fire problem as an epidemic—one that possibly took many lives, demolished infrastructure, and caused severe psychological and emotional trauma among the people. For these agonizing experiences, John Arthur explains that the Nzulezo ancestors considered relocating to a different environment.

[522] Nana Takrika VII, John Arthur, Safohyenle Kwame, and Nda Aluah in multiple interviews with the author, July to August 2022, at Nzulezo and Ahumasuazo.
[523] Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa*, 53.

Arthur states,

> Our ancestors were tired of dealing with the frequent fire outbreaks and wanted to leave their old settlement. I do not precisely know if they considered abandoning their water settlement altogether to go live in a landlocked area. But we learned that our ancestors were just tired of the recurring fire outbreaks. It is said that one day, Tufuhyenle Moga, one of the then esteemed elders, went fishing on the southerly side of the river where we have lots of raffia palm plants. He discovered that, that side of the river closer to the raffia vegetation was shallow in depth than their original settlement location. More so, the arc-formed nature of the raffia vegetation blocked gusty wind. So, Tufuhyenle Moga informed the then chief and the entire community about his discovery and encouraged them to relocate to that side—I mean to the edges of the raffia palm vegetation. Tufuhyenle Moga's discovery, therefore, led to the creation of this settlement where we presently live.[524]

Agya Emuah, Agya Kulu, and Joshua Ezoa affirm John Arthur's supposition, from which we learn that the present-day Nzulezo settlement was allegedly the second stilt-house village to be created on the Amanzule River. This re-creation of settlements has significant implications for understanding the evolving life of the Nzulezo ancestors in pre-colonial Appolonia and on the Amanzule River. For instance, it helps "correct" the belief that the present-day Ahumasuazo town, also known as "Nzulezo Number Two," represents the second residency of the Nzulezo people's in Appolonia. However, historical evidence suggests that Ahumasuazo (or Gyamazu) was likely the first Nzulezo

[524] John Arthur in multiple interviews with the author, June 2017 and July 2018, at Nzulezo.

settlement location, allowing us to classify that settlement as "Nzulezo Number One." This interpretation suggests that the old stilt-house village constitutes the people's second major settlement and their first stilt-house village on the river. Perhaps, we can call the old stilt-house village as "Nzulezo Number Two." This logic, therefore, casts the current Nzulezo stilt-house settlement overlooking the raffia palm vegetation as "Nzulezo Number Three."

Determining the exact historical periods in which the above Nzulezo settlements were established is challenging due to the dearth of available historical sources. However, we can make educated guesses through the observations of Henry Meredith and Brodie Cruickshank, a colonial official for the British on the Gold Coast from 1834 to 1852. As suggested above, the Ahumasuazo-Gyamzu settlement (i.e., Nzulezo Number One) and the first Nzulezo stilt-house village (Nzulezo Number Two) were likely created between the mid-1700s and 1812, when Meredith's writings were published. In 1848, Brodie Cruickshank chronicled his experiences in the second British expedition to Appolonia, which ousted the then Appolonian King Kaku Aka.[525] In his diary, Cruickshank refers to the Nzulezo community as "the wooden village in the lagoon behind the plantation."[526] Cruickshank might be referring to the present-day Nzulezo stilt-house village (i.e.,

[525] For readings on the British invasion, see "Gold Coast Dispatches from Governor to Secretary of State," March 22, 1848. ADM 1/2/4, "Colonial Governor's Correspondence," Public Records and Archives Administration Department (Ghana National Archives), Accra, Ghana; Brodie Cruickshank, "Account of the expedition to Appolonia, 1848," 1848, p. 84. GB 102 MS 173088/01, "Gold Coast Papers," School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) Archives, University of London, London, U.K.; Francis Swanzy, "Narrative of the Expedition to Appolonia, from Cape Coast Castle, in 1848. CO 96/27 in the M. S. Magazine of May–June 1850, "Colonial Office Records," The National Archives, Kew Gardens, London, U.K.
For secondary sources, see J. Y. Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 72-138; Pierluigi Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 23; Mariano Pavanello, "Pawnship and Domestic Slavery in Chieftaincy Disputes (Nzema Area, Sw Ghana)," *Africa* 1, no. 1 (2019): 69–86.
[526] Brodie Cruickshank, "Account of the expedition to Appolonia, 1848," 1848, p. 84. GB 102 MS 173088/01, "Gold Coast Papers," School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) Archives, University of London, London, U.K.

Nzulezo Number Three), suggesting that by 1848, Nzulezo Number Three was likely established. This reasoning, therefore, lends historical clarity to the temporal development of the Nzulezo ancestors' resettlements in Appolonia from the mid-eighteenth century through the mid-nineteenth century.

Human-Environment Relationship: The Nzulezo People's Survival Strategy

The Nzulezo forebears may have succeeded in relocating from their old stilt-house settlement to Nzulezo Number Three and, in the process, perennially remedying the fire epidemic which terrorized them in their old location. However, the traumas from their previous fire experiences seemed to have followed them to their new location. John Arthur, together with the Nzulezo linguist Joshua Ezoa, Agya Kulu, Safohyenle Kwame, and Agya Emuah, explain that growing up in Nzulezo, they heard stories about how their grandparents previously separated the buildings intended for cooking (*senle sua*—kitchen) from those in which they slept (*asua kunlu*—bedroom).[527] They further suggest that this separation reflects their forebears' effort to mitigate the potential spread of fire in the Nzulezo Number Three.[528] These research collaborators do not precisely know the period in which the *senle sua* and *asua kunlu* buildings used to be separated, but their supposition points to the existence of pyrophobia (the fear of fire) among the pre-colonial Nzulezo residents in Nzulezo Number Three.

Conceivably, the supposed pyrophobia was likely a by-product of the previous fire epidemic in Nzulezo Number Two. Considering its alleged frequency and magnitude, this epidemic might have been known to neighboring villages, particularly Megyina,

[527] John Arthur, Joshua Ezoa, Agya Kulu, Safohyenle Kwame, and Agya Emuah in separate conversations with the author, August 2022, at Ahumasuazo and Nzulezo.
[528] Ibid.

from whence Agya Bemea originated. Agya Bemea's alleged arsonist threats on the Nzulezo community, the story narrated above, which my research collaborators maintain that it was a true historical occurrence, can be historicized within the context of the Nzulezo people's apparent pyrophobia.

Speculatively, Agya Bemea, who is purported as a trickster and an opportunist, must have considered the Nzulezo people's fire problem and its ensuing pyrophobia as a viable opportunity to extort material goods from the Nzulezo community. For this alleged reason, Bemea must have haunted the Nzulezo people with threats of burning their settlement (i.e., Nzulezo Number Three) and the Amanzule River. Asking why the Nzulezo people initially succumbed to Bemea's demands before resisting him, John Arthur, the Nzulezo oral historian, states,

> I hope you do not think that our ancestors did not know the difference between water and fire: that water extinguishes fire. Who does not know this? After all, our ancestors cooked with fire throughout their journeys from Mali. How do you think they quenched their fires—with water, of course? So, Bemea's story is not about whether our ancestors were ignorant about water's "power" over fire. In fact, looking at it that way, you miss the point. Bemea's story is more about our people's ability to preserve their environment, particularly the Amanzule River. Giving Bemea their gold and other treasures shows our people's willingness to trade all they had or do all they could to protect the water and, importantly, preserve their new settlement. Look, they had weathered decades of fire eruptions in their old settlement. They were not going to allow Bemea to end their joy of

living in this new place.[529]

John Arthur introduces us to a fascinating perspective on the Nzulezo forebears' agency toward preserving their environment. That is, the people's resolution to protect their settlement and ecology from human-induced external threat, which invariably translates to self-preservation because protecting the Amanzule River meant preserving their community. Environmentalists such as Katrine Brown and Elizabeth Westaway refer to this human approach to the physical environment as adaptive capacity, a theoretical framework for explaining how and why humans utilize all available social and material resources to preserve and adapt to their ecology.[530] Environmentalists Denise Lawrence and Setha Low further suggests that people's "adaptive capability" to preserve their ecology is primarily based on their perception and relationship to that ecology.[531] For example, if a people elect to protect or change aspects of their geographical space, such action reflects the people's socio-cultural, political, and economic understanding and connection to that space.[532] These theoretical frameworks provide an excellent lens to contextualize John Arthur's supposition, which highlights the Nzulezo progenitors' efforts to protect the Amanzule ecology from external threats. Therefore, to explain the Nzulezo ancestors' agency toward the Amanzule waterscape, we need to understand the people's perception(s) of their environment and how the perception(s) influenced their relationship to the Amanzule river space. The rest of the chapter discusses this subject.

[529] John Arthur in multiple interviews with the author, June 2018 and August 2022, at Nzulezo.
[530] Katrina Brown and Elizabeth Westaway, "Agency, Capacity, and Resilience to Environmental Change: Lessons from Human Development, Well-Being, and Disasters," *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 36 (2011): 321–42, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-environ-052610-092905.
[531] Denise L. Lawrence and Setha M. Low, "The Built Environment and Spatial Form," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19 (1990), 454.
[532] Ibid, 454-455.

Nzulezo People's Perceptions and Connections to the Amanzule Waterscape

Since no historical or anthropological sources exist on the Nzulezo forebears' relationship with the Amanzule ecology, it is challenging to historicize the people's perceptions and connections to the Amanzule river space during the mid-eighteenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries. As a result, we must rely on the perspectives of the current Nzulezo residents, who share a deep understanding and connection to the Amanzule waterscape. Their insights provide valuable glimpses into the world of their predecessors during that time period.

Inquiring about how the present-day Nzulezo people perceive their ecology and how that might help us historicize their ancestors' relationship with the Amanzule waterscape, John Arthur and Nana Takrika VII discuss two interconnected notions that emphasize spirituality, security, and the principle of reciprocity, as rendered in the indigenous Akan philosophy of care. John Arthur explains that:

> This river we live on (i.e., the Amanzule River) is a male god. He is called *Amanzule*, meaning *maanle nzule* [which, in Twi, corresponds to *ɔman nsuo* and in English, the state's or nation's water]. *Amanzule* is a god for all the Nzema people (i.e., Appolonians), and we are very fortunate to live in the middle of such a god. *Amanzule* is greater and more powerful than the *gyamazu* deity. You can compare *Amanzule* to the Siane (i.e., River Ankobra) and Tanoɛ (River Tano), both of whom are highly revered (water) gods in Nzema (i.e., Appolonia). In fact, the *Amanzule* and the Tanoɛ are not friendly to each other, but the Siane and the *Amanzule* are friends. Let me not get into that discussion; it is tangential to your question. You asked about how we understand our water space. Well, we know that the river is a god who sheltered and cared for our ancestors and continues to

do so with us. We live in the middle of such a river, so *yɛte ɔbosom no yam* (thus, we live in the "belly of a god").[533]

Two important ideas can be deduced from the above interview excerpt. First, the people consider the Amanzule River as a powerful god that protected and provided for their ancestors and continues to do so for the current Nzulezo residents, and second, the people conceptualize their settlement as an epicenter of power and security because they "live in the 'belly of a god.'"

Contextualizing John Arthur's Ideas

The belief that bodies of water are an abode for spiritual entities is common among several indigenous African societies, particularly the Akan.[534] The Akan say, *asuo biara yɛ bosom*, meaning, all bodies of water are gods or deities. This saying confirms the Akan belief that bodies of water are earthly manifestations of spiritual forces.[535]

In *Drink, Power, and Cultural Change*, historian Emmanuel Akyeampong explains the cultural and spiritual significance of water in the Akan society, espousing that the Akan esteem water for its "coolness," cleansing qualities, and purity.[536] Importantly, water represents the spirit of the Supreme Being (*Nyame* or *Onyankropɔn*), and its use reflects one's dependence on God.[537]

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[533] John Arthur in an interview with the author, August 2022, at Nzulezo. The *Amanzule*'s relationship with the Siane and Tanoɛ are discussed by historians J. Y. Ackah and Pierluigi Valsecchi. Ackah's 1965 research collaborators explained that "the Amanzule and the Tandoh (which they call Tanoɛ) are at enmity with each other. Whenever a priest or priestess of one is being ferried across the other, his or her eyes much be covered with cloth. The Amanzule is believed to have taken the colour black to differentiate (it) from the Tandoh which is brown… both of them are friendly to the Ankobra (Siane)." See Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 61, footnote 13; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 10.

[534] Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong, *Drink, Power, and Cultural Change: A Social History of Alcohol in Ghana, C. 1800 to Recent Times* (Portsmouth, NH: Boydell & Brewer, Limited, 1996), 9; R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti* (Oxford, UK: The Clarendon press, 1923), 10-11.

[535] Ibid.

[536] Ibid, 8-9. For an extensive discussion of the cultural significance of water in Akan society, see Emmanuel Akyeampong, "Powerful Fluids: Alcohol and Water in the Struggle for Social Power in Urban Gold Coast, 1860-1919" (Evanston, IL, 1994), Collection 35/28. Box 1, Folder 2, Item 1, The Institute for Advanced Study and Research in the African Humanities Seminar Papers, Northwestern University Archives.

[537] Akyeampong, *Drink, Power, and Cultural Change*, 9; R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti* (Oxford, UK: The Clarendon press, 1923), 11.

The Akan dependence on God through water—i.e., their use of water relative to God—is expressed in several ways such as through *apaeɛ* (rituals). During *apaeɛ*, water facilitates communication between the spiritual and physical worlds, between humans and metaphysical beings.[538] Water also functions as a powerful fluid for spiritual activities like *nsaguo* (libation or prayers) while bodies of water serve as custodians of morality.[539] Moreso, bodies of water represent the habitations of spiritual beings, as reflected in the above Akan saying, *asuo biara yɛ bosom*—all bodies of water is a god. This latter tenet applies in present-day Nzulezo. The current Nzulezo residents believe that the Amanzule River is the abode of the *Amanzule* god and, therefore, a space of refuge and spiritual power. This explains their belief in "living in the bell of a god."[540]

The notion that the Amanzule god protected and provided (and continues to do so) for the Nzulezo community looms large in people's perception of their ecology. According to the current Nzulezo people, the Amanzule river and the Amanzule god are one and the same, and its protection and provision manifest in diverse ways, including offering fish (i.e., bumper harvest) for the Nzulezo people, especially after prayers and animal sacrifices have been offered, and preventing the drowning of Nzulezo residents.[541] There are stories of the Amanzule god "rescuing" Nzulezo people, whose dugout canoes had sank, from dying. Joshua Ezoa and Akwasi Eba witnessed one such incident and provided a firsthand account.

> A woman returning from her farm happened to have her canoe capsized by the gusty wind on the northerly banks of the Amanzule River. Some residents saw her

[538] Akyeampong, *Drink, Power, and Cultural Change*, 5.
[539] Ibid, 9.
[540] Adwoba Ezoa, Mary Eba, Gifty Eba, Nda Aluah, Rockson Ndayimah, Safohyenle Kwame, Agya Kulu, Arthur Ezoa Aka, John Arthur, Joshua Ezoa, and Agya Yaw Hunamgbule in separate conversations with the author, July to August 2022, at Ahumasuazo and Nzulezo.
[541] John Arthur, Akwasi Eba, Joshua Ezoa, and Arthur Ezoa Aka in interviews with the author, August 2022, at Nzulezo.

> waving a cloth at a far distance and immediately realized that the individual was at risk of drowning—they knew this because that incident was not the first to occur. It had happened in the past. So, they quickly paddled their dugout canoes to rescue the woman. [According to my research collaborators,] the woman later explained that the gusty wind overturned her canoe, but she continued to stay afloat the river because she felt that some platform underneath the river supported her. She was drenched in the river from feet to shoulder, but her head remained above the river's surface. When the rescuers got closer to her, she then begun to drown, and they quickly saved her. [Why did the woman stay afloat until the rescuers drew closer? I probed]. Oh, it is the *Amanzule*. He sustained the woman, and had done this before, in the past. [When you say in the past, what time or period are you referring to?]. We do not know the specific times for the other incidents, but for the one we witnessed, we were in our teenage years. So, maybe, three to four decades ago.[542]

Safohyenle Kwame and Arthur Ezoa Aka verify that the above incident truly happened.[543] However, they cautioned against us believing the incident to be the people's "complete reality." They too have witnessed a few Nzulezo residents die from drowning. In fact, Arthur Ezoa Aka's two-year-old child nearly died from drowning in 2020. Aka explains that his daughter went missing for some minutes, which got the entire community worried and searching for the child. They found the child half-dead, floating on the river's surface underneath a neighbor's house.[544] The child had accidentally tripped into the river and gulped water into her

[542] Joshua Ezoa and Akwasi Eba in a conversation with the author, August 2022, at Nzulezo.
[543] Safohyenle Kwame and Arthur Ezoa Aka in separate interviews with the author, August 2022, at Ahumasuazo and Nzulezo.
[544] Arthur Ezoa Aka in an interview with the author, August 2022, at Nzulezo.

lungs, leaving her unconscious, buoyant, and almost dead. Although Aka believes that "luck," not the Amanzule god, made it possible for them to find his daughter just in time, he and Safohyenle Kwame emphasize the protective role of the Amanzule god in the lives of the Nzulezo residents.[545]

The Nzulezo people's beliefs in the Amanzule god offering protection and the river serving as an epicenter of power and refuge demonstrate their deep connection and understanding of their environment. Based on these beliefs, one can surmise that, perhaps, the eighteenth- and nineteenth century Nzulezo ancestors also conceptualized the Amanzule ecology as a source of spiritual power and a place of refuge and, therefore, saw themselves as living in the "belly of a god." This supposition could explain why they refused to leave the Amanzule waterscape despite the fire outbreak and Agya Bemea's threats.

Nana Takrika VII's Interpretation of Nzulezo People's Relationship to Amanzule

My discussion with the Nzulezo chief Nana Takrika VII about the community's perception and relationship with the Amanzule waterscape also sheds a unique perspective that aligns with and also deviates from John Arthur's account. Nana Tatrika VII states,

> The *Amanzule* god is like a mother to us. [I probed, if the *Amanzule* is perceived to be a male god, why do you or the community construe it to be a "mother"?]. *Amanzule wɔ abadaeɛ ankasa* (the *Amanzule* truly has or demonstrates motherly care and instincts). He is kind and does not easily take offense at our wrong doings, as do other deities like *Gyamazu*. For example, in years of limited harvest or times of crisis, we offer him less [animal] sacrifices during our annual prayers, and he accepts our prayers/sacrifice. But other gods would likely not be happy

[545] Arthur Ezoa Aka and Safohyenle Kwame in separate interviews with the author, August 2022, at Ahumasuazo and Nzulezo.

> with that. The last thing *Amanzule* would do is kill an individual who has offended another. *Amanzule* would allow the offender to confess their wrongdoing and amend their broken relationship with the offended. He also protected *yɛn nananom* (our ancestors) in the past and continues to protect us, like a mother would do for their child. For this reason, we, the children, also feel the need to safeguard the water from any [human-induced] contamination.[546]

Like John Arthur, Nana Takrika VII stresses the Amanzule River's protective role in the lives of both the Nzulezo ancestors and their present-day descendants. Nana Trikrika VII also presents another layer of complexity to the Nzulezo people's understanding and connection to their environment—i.e., the *Amanzule* god and river construed as a mother and the people as children. The mother-and-child idea thrusts us into the symbolic realm of the mother-child relationship and its caregiving principles in indigenous Akan philosophy. Below is a discussion of some Akan philosophies that help contextualize the supposed mother-child relationship between the Nzulezo people and the Amanzule ecology.

Mother-Child Relationship in Akan Philosophy and Society

The pathways to Akan philosophy are primarily paved in social conventions and proverbs. In the Akan society, several proverbs abound that speaks of the centrality of motherhood and, importantly, matriliny to the Akan social order. For instance, proverbs like *ɔwoo dom a, ne kra din de awoawo Afua* (mother of many whose soul's name is the productive Friday-born female child), *ɔdehye Baatan a ɔte n'ase de ne ho* (the royal mother who is responsible for her existence only to herself), and *obaahemaa a, ɔde Asaase* (the queen mother who owns the land) illuminate the complexity of motherhood and its relationship to

[546] Nana Takrika VII in an interview with the author, August 2022, at Nzulezo. Agya Kulu also supported Nana Takrika VII's view in a separate conversation in that month and year.

reproduction, power, and land.[547] These aspects of motherhood are baked into the principle of matriliny, which takes its source from the Akan conception of *person*.

The Akan believe that a person is made of three main elements: *sunsum* (the spirit, given by *Nyame*, the Supreme Being and creator of all things), *okra* (the soul, which bears the character or unique personal presence of an individual—the *okra* is given by the child's father), and *honam* or *nipadua* (the body of the individual).[548] Adding to these three existential elements of a person is *mogya* (blood), which the individual is believed to receive from *solely* the mother.[549] Because the Akan consider blood, particularly menstrual blood, a fertility fluid and believe that only women can transmit blood (life) to their offspring, they position females (women and mothers) at the core of the society.[550] Conceived so, the Akan practice a matrilineal system, which centralizes femaleness and motherhood in matters of inheritance, and, importantly, kinship, explaining why an Akan (*ɔkanni ba*) belongs to his or her mother's

[547] I learned these and many other Akan proverbs from the African historian Kwasi Konadu, who has written extensively about the Akan people of Ghana and the Atlantic diaspora, as well as their philosophical thoughts and belief systems. I also drew on the works by R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti Proverbs: The Primitive Ethics of a Savage People* (New York, NY: Cornell University Library, 2009); J. G. Christaller, *Twi Mmebusɛm. A Collection of Three Thousand and Six Hundred Tshi Proverbs, in Use among the Negroes of the Gold Coast Speaking the Asante and Fante Language, Collected, Together with Their Variations, and Alphabetically Arranged* (Basel: Basel, The Basel German Evangelical Missionary Society, 1879); C. A. Akrofi, *Twi Mmebusem: Twi Proverbs; with English Translations and Comments* (London, UK: Macmillan and Company, 1962); Ivor Agyeman-Duah, Kwame Anthony Appiah, and Peggy Appiah, *Bu Me Bɛ: Proverbs of the Akans*, Bilingual edition (Oxfordshire, UK: Ayebia Clarke Publishing, 2007); Kofi Antubam, *Ghana's Heritage of Culture* (Accra, GH: Books on Demand, 1963).
[548] Kwasi Wiredu, "An Oral Philosophy of Personhood: Comments on Philosophy and Orality," *Research in African Literatures* 40, no. 1 (2009): 8–18; Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye, eds., *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies I* (Washington, D.C: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992), 3-7; Sanelisiwe Primrose Ndlovu, "A Critical Exploration of the Ideas of Person and Community in Traditional Zulu Thought" (M.A. Thesis, South Africa, University of the Western Cape, 2021), 10-11.
[549] Emmanuel Akyeampong and Pashington Obeng, "Spirituality, Gender, and Power in Asante History," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 28, no. 3 (1995): 489; Alex Wilson, "Personhood, Human Rights and Health among the Akan and Igbo of West Africa," *African Identities* 10 (November 1, 2012): 441-442, https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2012.730817.
[550] Akyeampong and Obeng, "Spirituality, Gender, and Power in Asante History," 489; Akyeampong, *Drink, Power, and Cultural Change*, 11.

lineage.[551]

The significance of blood, motherhood, and matriliny in Akan philosophy and social order constitutes the basis for the centrality of the mother-child relationship in Akan society. This foundational idea forms the backdrop for interpretating Nzulezo people's mother-child relationship with the Amanzule ecology. As discussed in chapter two, Appolonians (or the Nzema) are an Akan people and, therefore, a matrilineal society.[552] Thus, the above Akan philosophical thoughts on motherhood, matriliny, and the mother-child relationship applied to the pre-colonial and the present-day Appolonian society. With the Nzulezo people perceiving the *Amanzule* as a *mother* and themselves as *children*, they express the Akan conception of mother-child bond in their deep relationship with the Amanzule ecology—a relationship that subsists on the symbolic notions of mutual protection and caregiving reciprocity.

The belief that the Amanzule god has sheltered the Nzulezo community and for that reason, the current Nzulezo residents "feel the need to safeguard the water from any [human-induced] contamination," as Nana Takrika VII suggests, reflects the reciprocal principle in the Amanzule-Nzulezo people relationship. This mother-child caregiving reciprocity finds proper expression in the Akan proverb, *ɔni hwɛ abɔfra ma ne se fifi, na abɔfra nso ahwɛ ɔni ama ne se atutu*—which literally means, a mother ensures that their child grows teeth and in return, the child makes sure that their aged mother loses their teeth.[553] Contextually, the Akan expects parents, particularly mothers, to take care of their children until they come of age (i.e., the child

[551] Emmanuel Akyeampong and Pashington Obeng, "Spirituality, Gender, and Power in Asante History," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 28, no. 3 (1995): 489; Alex Wilson, "Personhood, Human Rights and Health among the Akan and Igbo of West Africa," *African Identities* 10 (November 1, 2012): 441-442, https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2012.730817.
[552] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 2-3; Pierluigi Valsecchi, "The 'True Nzema': A Layered Identity," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 71, no. 3 (2001): 391–392; A. Adu Boahen, "The Origins of the Akan," *Ghana Notes and Queries.*, no. 9 (1966): 3–10.
[553] Christaller, *Twi Mmebusɛm*, 147.

grows teeth); and, reciprocally, the “grown-up” child cares for the mother in her old age when she loses her teeth.[554] The current residents of Nzulezo consider themselves the "grown-up" child and responsible guardians of the Amanzule river god, who sheltered their ancestors centuries ago. This sense of mutual protection and caregiving reciprocity likely existed among the founders of the Nzulezo community. These beliefs may have contributed to the Nzulezo forebears' resilience in the face of challenges, such as the fire outbreak and resistance against Agya Bemea, and were likely passed down to future generations.

Conclusion

This chapter explores the evolving life of the Nzulezo ancestors in Appolonia from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. It is suggested that after King Amihyia allowed the Nzulezo progenitors to settle in Appolonia in the mid-eighteenth century, the people temporarily resided in the Ahumasuazo-Gyamazu area, which was situated north of the Amanzule River. This settlement is referred to as “Nzulezo Number One.” Drawing on reports by European writers such as Henry Meredith, we are able to deduce that between the mid-1700s and 1812, the Nzulezo settlers moved from the Ahumasuazo-Gyamazu location to the Amanzule River, where they established their first stilt-house village, known as “Nzulezo Number Two.”

Nzulezo oral traditions further suggest that the ancestors of Nzulezo had to build a new stilt-house village, known as "Nzulezo Number Three," on the southern side of the Amanzule River due to a fire epidemic that threatened their previous stilt-house settlement, "Nzulezo Number Two." Comparing Meredith's report to Brodie Cruickshank's 1848 observation, it is estimated that "Nzulezo Number Three" was likely constructed between 1812 and 1848 and has since remained in its current location.

[554] Nana Osei Bonsu III, the war chief of Agona State (Agonaman) in southern Ghana, instructed me about the principles of caregiving and dependency in Akan society.

This chapter not only traces the history of the Nzulezo ancestors residency in pre-colonial Appolonia but also explores the reasons behind their decision to reside in the middle of the Amanzule River despite facing unfavorable natural and human-made circumstances, including the alleged fire eruptions and threats from Agya Bemea. Drawing on the beliefs of the present-day Nzulezo descendants, this chapter contends that the mid-eighteenth- and nineteenth century Nzulezo ancestors likely construed the Amanzule ecology to be a space of refuge and spiritual power. These forebears also probably cultivated a special relationship (a *mother-child relationship*) with the Amanzule river god, treating him as a *mother* figure and themselves as his *children*. These beliefs must have influenced the people's decision to reside on the Amanzule River for a century and must have been passed down to the present-day Nzulezo descendants.

Having discussed the ideological reasons behind the Nzulezo ancestors' decision to reside in the Amanzule environment, it is crucial to examine the social systems and practices that the people instituted to facilitate the social reproduction of the Nzulezo community over time. Chapter five delves into this inquiry, shedding light on how the pre-colonial Nzulezo population reconstructed a "sustainable" way of life in the Amanzule ecosystem.

CHAPTER FIVE:

Harvesting Lives on Water: The Nzulezo Social Reproduction

This chapter focuses on the pre-colonial Nzulezo community's social evolution (or reproduction) from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century.[555] It examines the economic systems, territorial configurations, and socio-political structures that allowed the community to thrive on the Amanzule River for a century. Placing the community within time and space, this chapter examines Nzulezo's social reproduction in relation to the socio-historical development of the wider pre-colonial Gold Coast society. Historian Ray Kea's research on the seventeenth-century Gold Coast settlements, trade, and polities offers a useful analytical framework for exploring the pre-colonial Nzulezo community's social evolution.[556]

Based on Ray Kea's theory, which I discuss below, I contend that the pre-colonial Nzulezo community thrived on the Amanzule River due to three interconnected systems of reproduction: settlement order, commercial order, and socio-political order. The settlement order pertains to the community's use and ownership of space within the Amanzule waterscape. I argue that the pre-colonial Nzulezo population had a comprehensive understanding of the Amanzule ecology, which enabled them to dominate other organisms (plants and animals) within the Amanzule ecology and exploit the water space for their survival. The commercial and socio-political orders, on the other hand, involved the economic, social, and political structures and practices that supported the community's social reproduction. The Nzulezo ancestors' reliance on fishing, palm wine and alcohol production, and farming elsewhere contributed significantly to the community's sustenance. Additionally, the pre-colonial Nzulezo community embraced and

[555] I use "social evolution" or "social reproduction" interchangeably to represent the growth of the Nzulezo community over time.
[556] Ray A. Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Polities in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

reproduced the eighteenth-century Appolonian socio-political system, further supporting their social reproduction.

An Overview of Ray Kea's Theory

According to Kea, the evolution of the pre-colonial Gold Coast society primarily subsisted on three overlapping systems: the settlement order, the socio-political and military order, and the commercial order.[557] The settlement order considers questions of territoriality. It helps explain the territorial organizations of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Gold Coast populations along distinct locales and into varying distributions, which led to the development of towns and villages.[558] Once villages and towns were established, the socio-political and military order, comprising actors like peasants, enslaved people, chiefs, and *abrempon* ("important men"), helps explain the institutionalization of state-governing apparatus, which defined what constituted power, authority, and social dependence in pre-colonial Gold Coast.[559] The commercial order corresponds to the trading sector of the political economy and its relationship to production.[560] The commercial order helped define critical economic phenomena such as trade operations, currencies, and credit-debt transactions.[561]

The Settlement Order

Kea contends that the pre-colonial Gold Coast society was divided into two (ideologically) separate but (spatially) connected areas: urban and rural.[562] The urban space was considered a symbol of power and authority because it was home to the ruling class, which comprised chiefs, community elders, and wealthy merchants.[563] In contrast, the rural areas

[557] Ibid, 1.
[558] Ibid, 1-2.
[559] Ibid, 2.
[560] Ibid.
[561] Ibid.
[562] Ibid, 11-15.
[563] Ibid.

located on the outskirts of the Gold Coast's political geography were mainly inhabited by the peasantry and the slave class.[564]

Indeed, several pre-colonial Gold Coast centralized states, including Denkyira, Asante, Fante, and Appolonia, reflected Kea's framework. In the case of pre-colonial Appolonia, for instance, Pierluigi Valsecchi argues that Beyin and Atuabo (or Adoabo) served as the two principal urban towns where political power and major economic activities occurred.[565] All other Appolonian towns, including Nzulezo, were considered rural areas.[566] Kea and Valsecchi's theses suggest that pre-colonial Gold Coast societies had strict dichotomous geo-political spaces—urban versus rural areas—with distinct and competing social groups—the ruling class versus the peasantry and slave class. According to these scholars, these spatial and demographic binaries were essential to the social reproduction of pre-colonial Gold Coast societies.

The Commercial Order

The term "commercial order," coined by Ray Kea, refers to how a society produces and distributes goods and the labor involved in these processes.[567] It also encompasses a society's trade relationships with external partners.[568] Kea contends that the Gold Coast commercial order during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was characterized by a constantly changing socio-historical environment, where various actors traded locally-produced and imported commodities to foster the growth of the Gold Coast's political economy.[569] The items produced locally included gold, ivory, and salt, whereas tobacco, European cloth, and firearms constituted some of

[564] Ibid.
[565] Pierluigi Valsecchi, "Free People, Slaves and Pawns in the Western Gold Coast: The Demography of Dependency in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century British Archival Source," *Ghana Studies* 17, no. 1 (2014): 237-38.
[566] Ibid.
[567] Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Polities in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast*, 171.
[568] Ibid.
[569] Ibid, 172.

the imported commodities.[570] The commercial actors involved were the local Gold Coasters (i.e., the ruling, peasant, and slave classes) and external traders, mainly European merchants.[571] These actors, particularly the ruling and peasant classes, competed for land, which served as the most critical resource around which commerce revolved.[572]

Kea further argues that the Gold Coast commercial order subsisted on two principal production systems: the tributary and the slave-owning modes of production.[573] The tributary system involved a social structure where the ruling class and the peasantry competed for resources, particularly land.[574] The ruling class, consisting of chiefs and *abrempon*, monopolized land ownership, making it difficult for the peasantry to access and own arable lands.[575] On the other hand, the slave-owning system depended on the juridical ownership of individuals.[576] Kea explains that the pre-colonial Gold Coast ruling class turned their workers, particularly enslaved individuals, into both commodity and non-commodity means of production.[577] Enslaved people were used in the production of goods like gold and salt (i.e., commodity modes of production), while others served as house attendants and traders for their masters (non-commodity means of production).[578]

The rise of the Atlantic slave trade on the Gold Coast during the mid-seventeenth century engendered substantial transformations to the existing Gold Coast commercial order, mainly regarding the types, extent, and frequency of the goods traded.[579] Ray Kea contends that

[570] Ibid, 171.
[571] Ibid.
[572] Ibid, 172.
[573] Ibid.
[574] Ibid.
[575] Ibid, 5-6.
[576] Ibid, 5-6.
[577] Ibid, 5-6.
[578] Ibid.
[579] Ibid, 172.

economic attention shifted from land to the trade of enslaved people.[580] He explains that the increase in slave trading, especially in the eighteenth century, resulted in more warfare on the Gold Coast, leading to the capture and sale of thousands of enslaved Africans to both European and local Gold Coast slave merchants and holders.[581] As a result of this development (and borrowing the words of anthropologist Jane Guyer), "wealth in land" in pre-colonial Gold Coast shifted to "wealth in people."[582]

Furthermore, the influx of diverse European traders (including the British, Dutch, Danes, Brandenburgers, and Swedes) along the coast of the Gold Coast, during this period, led to a restructuring of the Gold Coast settlement order. Kea espouses that coastal societies like Elmina, Cape Coast, and Anomabo, which were previously considered sleeping towns, suddenly assumed significant political and economic relevance mainly due to European presence and trading activities taking place there.[583] These coastal towns became the locus of the Gold Coast commercial system such that John Barbot, a French explorer and merchant who traded at different Gold Coast port towns during the last quarter of the seventeenth century, documented during that period that "those near the sea embraced the commerce from the first coming of the French among them; buying their goods to sell again to the inland people nearest to them, who again carried these goods to others more remote.[584]

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[580] Ibid.
[581] Ibid, 368.
[582] See Jane I. Guyer, "Wealth in People, Wealth in Things–Introduction," *The Journal of African History* 36, no. 1 (1995): 83–90; Jane I. Guyer and Samuel M. Eno Belinga, "Wealth in People as Wealth in Knowledge: Accumulation and Composition in Equatorial Africa," *The Journal of African History* 36, no. 1 (1995): 91–120.
[583] Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Polities in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast*, 174-75. Also see Randy J. Sparks, *Where the Negroes Are Masters: An African Port in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Rebecca Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Boydell & Brewer, 2014); J. J. Crooks, *Records Relating to the Gold Coast Settlements from 1750 to 1874* (London, UK: Cass Publishers, 1973); W. E. F. Ward, *A History of Ghana*, 4th edition (George Allen & Unwin, 1959).
[584] Jean Barbot, *Déscription de La Côte d'Or de Guinée in Déscription des Côtes d'Afrique.* (London, UK: Manuscript, PRO, 1688), 256. Also cited in Kea's *Settlements, Trade, and Polities in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast*, 171.

The Socio-political and Military Order

Like the commercial order, the socio-political and military order consisted of two broad categories of Gold Coast actors, which Ray Kea calls the *nobles* and the *retainers* and *commoners*.[585] The individuals constituting the noble class were coterminous to those who made up the ruling class within the commercial order. However, these individuals differed in their political and economic roles within the society.[586] Kea explains that while the ruling class controlled land and trade within the economic sphere, the nobles, comprising kings, sub-chiefs—and I will include queens—military captains, and other *abrempon*, "formed the composite social class that controlled various functions or "specialisms" within the organized set of state apparatuses, including administration, war, and religion."[587] Thus, the ruling class operated strictly within the domain of commerce, whereas the nobles performed social, religious, political, and, sometimes, economic roles that promoted the growth of the pre-colonial Gold Coast society.[588]

The commoners and retainers, on the other hand, were respectively identical to the peasantry and the enslaved workers.[589] The commoners, like the peasantry, constituted the citizenry of the society over whom the noble class directly exercised state power and authority, making them political dependents or subjects of the nobles.[590] The commoners formed the largest social group within the society; however, their inaccessibility to political and economic wealth and power positioned them as stewards with usufruct rights to the lands and people belonging to the noble class.[591] As stewards from whom the nobles demanded levies or taxes, the commoners

[585] Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Polities in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast*, 97-107.
[586] Ibid, 97-98.
[587] Ibid.
[588] Ibid, 98-104.
[589] Kea, 107.
[590] Kea, 107.
[591] Kea, 108.

generated revenue for the noble class, which further augmented the latter's socio-political and economic standing within the society.[592]

Unlike the commoners who were political dependents and subjects, the retainer group served as personal dependents of the nobles.[593] According to Kea, the retainers consisted of two categories: the bonded free people and enslaved people, both of whom served the noble class.[594] The bonded free people, which Kea calls "bonded retainers," were commoners whose social status had downgraded as a result of debt owed, poverty, or serious offenses committed.[595] Hence, the bonded retainers included debtors, pawns, poor people unable to pay court fines, and individuals who purposely place themselves or their children in service or under the protection of wealthy and powerful individuals—the nobles.[596]

The enslaved people or "slave retainers" were the group who originated from extensive geographical areas and whom the nobles obtained through market transactions.[597] From the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, the Gold Coast received over one hundred thousand slave retainers—the *odonko* in Twi or *akɛlɛ* in Nzema—from the West African interior and from across the Atlantic Ocean.[598] Archaeologist J. O. Bellis suggests that the Dyula merchants supplied Gold Coast societies with enslaved people from the savannah and desert regions of West Africa.[599] Historians John Vogt, Larry Yarak, and Hermann von Hesse also demonstrate that from the late fifteenth century to the early sixteenth century, the Portuguese imported

[592] Kea, 108.
[593] Kea, 106.
[594] Kea, 105.
[595] Ibid.
[596] Ibid, 105.
[597] Ibid, 105.
[598] Cite J. O. Bellis, "Archaeology and the Culture History of Ghana: A Case Study; John Vogt his article in Ray Kea's endnote, Ray Kea, 105,
[599] See James O. Bellis, "Archaeology and the Culture History of Ghana: A Case Study" (Ph.D. Thesis, Bloomington, IN, Indiana University, 1972), 95-97, 108-109, 111. Also cited in Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Polities in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast*, 368.

thousands of enslaved people to Elmina and Axim from the Benin and Kongo Kingdoms.[600] In service to the noble class, both the bonded and slave retainers performed a myriad of tasks ranging from household chores, including cooking and fetching firewood, to "field" work, such as farming, fishing, and serving as militiamen.[601] The British Governor George Maclean documents in 1835 that the first British large-scale invasion of Appolonia that year involved approximately 4,500 militiamen, composed mainly of "bonded and slave retainers" from Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, and northern Nigeria.[602] The retainers from northern Nigeria were mostly of Fulani origin.[603]

To summarize, Ray Kea's thesis proposes that the pre-colonial Gold Coast society maintained itself through settlement patterns, economic systems, and socio-political and military organizations. The society was made up of heterogeneous actors, such as the Gold Coast aristocrats, peasants, enslaved people, and European merchants. The Gold Coast actors competed for resources like land and people while trading with foreign merchants. These commercial actors also adapted to changes caused by macro-historical events like the Atlantic slave trade. Kea believes that the settlement, commercial, and socio-political orders primarily accounts for social evolution of the pre-colonial Gold Coast society.

Criticism of Ray Kea's Theory

It is important to note that Kea's framework specifically applies to centralized societies on the Gold Coast. This framework is useful for analyzing the social evolution of pre-colonial

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[600] John L. Vogt, "The Early Sao Tome-Principe Slave Trade with Mina, 1500-1540," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 6, no. 3 (1973): 453–67; Hermann W. von Hesse and Larry W. Yarak, "A Tale of Two 'Returnee' Communities in the Gold Coast and Ghana: Accra's Tabon and Elmina's Ex-Soldiers, 1830s to the Present," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 51, no. 2 (2018): 197–217. Also see Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Polities in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast*, 105-106.
[601] Kea, 106.
[602] George Maclean, "Gold Coast Dispatches from Governor to Secretary of State," 1835. ADM 1/2/4, "Reports," Public Records and Archives Administration Department [i.e., the Ghana National Archives], Accra, Ghana.
[603] Ibid.

Gold Coast polities like Aowin, Denkyira, and Appolonia. Historian Pierluigi Valsecchi, for example, has drawn on Kea's theory to argue that Appolonia's evolution was primarily driven by political support mobilized through kinship networks, the use of ritual oaths (*amonle*) to secure loyalty from new settlers and political allies, and the establishment of commercial arrangements with both local Gold Coasters and Europeans.[604] He further explains that following Appolonia's crystallization into a polity in the early eighteenth century, the Appolonian kinship groups (matriclans), notably the *Ndwea* ruling family to which King Amihyia and his successors, including Nyanzu Aka and Kaku Aka, belonged, reconfigured the political landscape of Appolonia in ways that positioned the *Ndwea* ruling aristocrats as the wielders of political and economic power.[605] This political configuration relegated the Appolonian citizenry (i.e., peasants) and indigenous slave class to dependent status.[606] Through this governance system, the Kingdom of Appolonia "reproduced itself" throughout the eighteenth and the mid-nineteenth century, when the second British invasion toppled and consequently restructured the Appolonian monarchy.[607]

Although Valsecchi's analysis lends credence to Kea's thesis, Kea's framework suffers from excessive attention to land, causing him to portray land as the most important resource in the pre-colonial Gold Coast society, particularly during the pre-Atlantic era. This *land-centric* approach leads Kea to disregard the importance of water, plants, and other elements of the physical environment in the growth of the Gold Coast society. In this chapter, I will demonstrate that in pre-colonial Nzulezo, water—not land—was the primary socio-economic resource that

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[604] Pierluigi Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa: Appolonia from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 11-13, 140.
[605] Ibid, 102. Historian Pim van Assum supports Valsecchi's position in "The WIC-Appolonia War of 1761-1764: A Detailed Inquiry about How the Dutch Lost the War" (MPhil Thesis, Leiden, Netherlands, Leiden University, 2012), 6.
[606] Ibid.
[607] Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 19.

facilitated the community's growth. Although the pre-colonial Nzulezo ancestors cultivated farms in the Ahumasuazo and Gyamazu areas, the Amanzule waterscape formed the biological, economic, and socio-cultural foundations of the people's livelihood and sustenance. By highlighting the unique position of Nzulezo within the pre-colonial Gold Coast political geography, I contend that Ray Kea's land-centric framework is biased towards riverine communities like Nzulezo and, therefore, does not provide an exhaustive explanation for the socio-historical growth of the broader pre-colonial Gold Coast political geography to which Nzulezo belonged.

The Social Evolution of the Pre-colonial Nzulezo Community

To explain how the Nzulezo people survived on the Amanzule River over time, it is essential to understand the complex nature of the Amanzule ecosystem, which accommodated humans, plants, and animals. By understanding this ecosystem, we can better appreciate the innovative survival tactics used by the pre-colonial Nzulezo community to recreate livelihood on the river. The discussion of the Amanzule ecosystem—which I also refer to as Amanzule waterscape—finds proper expression when contextualized within the scholarship on built environments and forms, which I explore below.

The Amanzule Waterscape as a Built Environment

The study of how human culture and social systems interact with the physical environment dates to the nineteenth century.[608] Western eco-sociologists, earth scientists, and anthropologists, such as Emile Durkheim, Lewis Henry Morgan, Marcel Mauss, and Daryll Ford,

[608] Denise L. Lawrence and Setha M. Low, "The Built Environment and Spatial Form," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19 (1990), 454.

were some of the early scholars who examined such human-environment relationship.[609] In their studies, these scholars broadly categorized the physical environment into two main domains namely, the natural environment and the built environment.[610] The natural environment refers to the physical, chemical, and biological (i.e., the living and non-living) composite of the earth, which serves as the "resource base" for human society and has yet to receive any human-induced alterations.[611] Conversely, the built environment represents any geological space that humans have physically altered.[612] Environmentalists Denise Lawrence and Setha Low and educationist scholar Ruth Wilson maintain that humans live in built environments, which they create to satisfy their basic needs and, sometimes, their comfort.[613]

According to Wilson, Lawrence, and Low's definition, the Amanzule waterscape can be considered a built environment due to the presence and activities of the present-day Nzulezo people in that water space. The people's activities range from home construction to fishing and hunting, which Figures 1 and 2 below help illustrate. Figures 1 and 2 display various realms of the Amanzule built environment with the most visible domain being the current Nzulezo stilt-house settlement (i.e., Nzulezo Number Three). Environmentalist Karl Kropf and architect David Dubbelde classify human building types created within the built environment to shelter, define,

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[609] For readings on the works of the above-mentioned writers, see Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, *Primitive Classification*, trans. Rodney Needham (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1967); Marcel Mauss, *Seasonal Variations of the Eskimo: A Study in Social Morphology* (Routledge, 2013); Lewis Henry Morgan, *Houses and House-Life of the American Aborigines* (Chicago, IL: University Of Chicago Press, 1965); Daryll Forde, *Habitat, Economy and Society; a Geographical Introduction to Ethnology* (London: Dutton, 1934). On the historiography of built environment in Africa, see 7/19/23 6:*07:00 PM*

[610] Lawrence and Low, "The Built Environment and Spatial Form," 454.

[611] Piet H. Nienhuis and Egbert Boeker, "The Natural Environment," in *Principles of Environmental Sciences*, ed. Jan J. Boersema and Lucas Reijnders (New York, NY: Springer, 2009), 143; Anne Boersma and Isabella Premoli Silva, "Distribution of Paleogene Planktonic Foraminifera — Analogies with the Recent?," *Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology*, The Oceans of the Paleogene, 83, no. 1 (February 1, 1991), 22, https://doi.org/10.1016/0031-0182(91)90074-2.

[612] Lawrence and Low, "The Built Environment and Spatial Form," 454.

[613] Ruth Wilson, "What Is Nature?," *International Journal of Early Childhood Environmental Education* 7, no. 1 (2019), 26; Lawrence and Low, "The Built Environment and Spatial Form," 454.

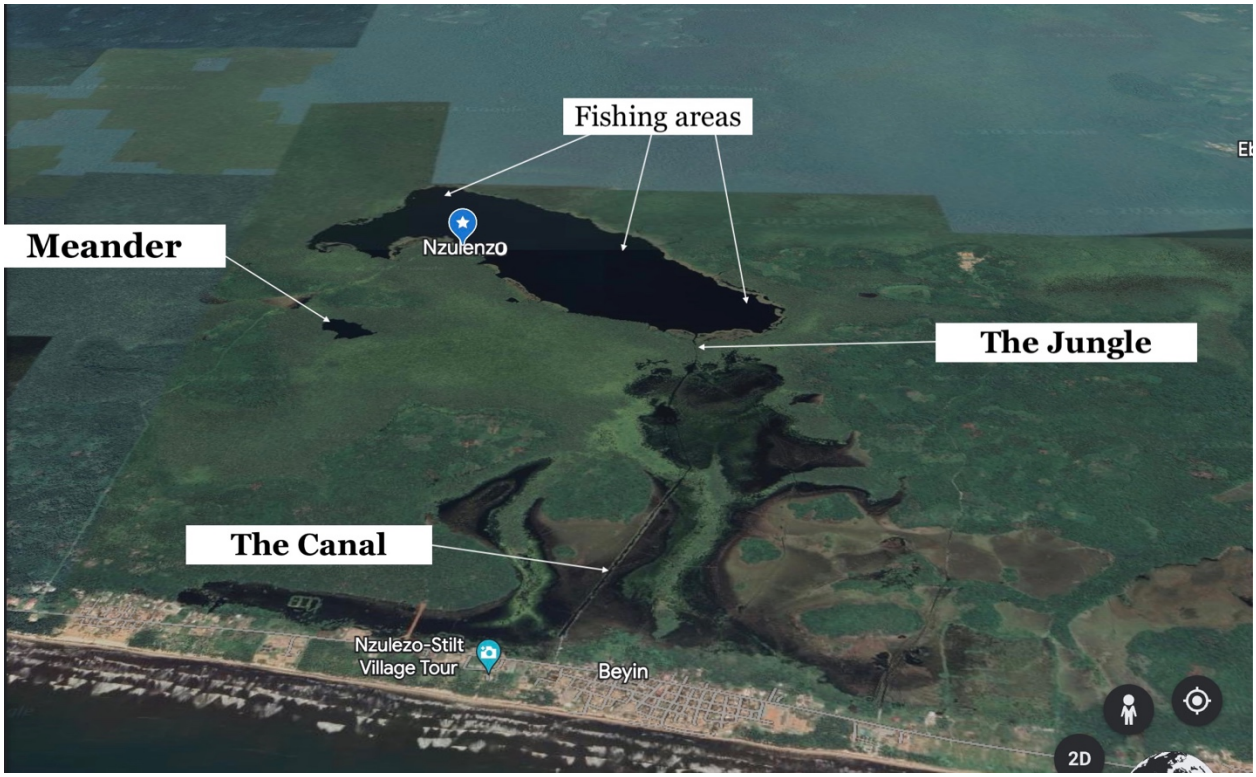
and protect human activities as "built forms."[614] Thus, Nzulezo Number Three, as well as the previous Nzulezo stilt-house settlement (Nzulezo Number Two), represent built forms within the Amanzule built environment.

In addition to the built form, fishing and hunting zones are other essential domains of the Amanzule built environment. The present-day Nzulezo residents conduct fishing at different areas of the Amanzule waterscape, including the river's northern, western, and eastern banks, as well as within the raffia palm vegetation, especially in the area labeled as "the Jungle." The so-called Jungle constitutes the only passageway to "outsiders" coming from Beyin to Nzulezo, and in that river space, small-scale fishing is conducted with traps called *duma*—an image of the *duma* is displayed in Figure 21 below.[615]

[614] Cite Lawrence & Low, and other scholars on Tony Yeboah's list. See Karl Kropf, "Ambiguity in the Definition of Built Form," *Urban Morphology* 18 (2014), 41–57, https://doi.org/10.51347/jum.v18i1.3995; K. S. Kropf, "The Definition of Built Form in Urban Morphology." (Ph.D., University of Birmingham, 1993), 2, https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.343440; David Dubbelde, "Influence of Culture, Faith, Environment, and Building Technology on the Built Form: The Case of Nineteenth Century Catholic Churches in Galveston, Texas" (Ph.D., Texas, USA, Texas A&M University, 2006), 3-4.

[615] Agya Yaw Hunamgbule, Akwasi Eba, Arthur Ezoa Aka, and Rockson Ndayima in conversations with the author, July 2018 and August 2022, at Nzulezo.

Figure 19: A Google Earth (Satellite) Image of the Amanzule Waterscape



Copyright: the author adapted this image from Google Earth's satellite images and labeled the various realms of the Amanzule waterscape. It must be noted that the Amanzule River flows through the vegetation to the area labeled "The Canal," which forms the starting point of the waterway from Beyin to Nzulezo. A close-up photo of the canal is displayed below in Figure 22.

Figure 20: A Bird's-eye View of the Present-day Nzulezo Stilt-house Community

Copyright: the author adapted this photo from Google Earth's satellite images.

Figure 21: *Duma* Fishing Traps

Copyright: photo taken by the author in August 2022 at Nzulezo.

Figure 22: The Nzulezo Canal

Copyright: photo taken by the author in September 2021.

The Nzulezo people also hunt animals like monkeys, whose habitation is the raffia palm plantation overlooking the present-day Nzulezo community, and crocodiles, which live in the area classified in Figure 19 as Meander.[616] Meander is a crocodile-infested zone, which lies approximately 400 meters south of the current Nzulezo community.[617] The presence of crocodiles in the Amanzule ecology is traceable to the early nineteenth century, at the latest. In Henry Meredith's 1812 account, he describes the Amanzule waterscape as "deep with a line of thirty fathoms. There is a variety of fish here; the crocodile, or alligator, inhabits it; and a large species of snakes has been discovered on its banks."[618] This large species of snake could be none other than pythons, which the current Nzulezo population confirm that there used to be pythons on the eastern side of the river.[619] Adwoba Ezoa, Nda Aluah, Agya Kulu, Agya Emuah, John Arthur, and Joshua Ezoa believe that the Nzulezo people's hunting activities on the river must have forced the pythons to move farther away, probably eastward of the Nzulezo village, to avoid being killed.[620] The crocodiles, on the other hand, continue to occupy the Meander area. According to Akwasi Eba, Joshua Ezoa, and John Arthur, who hunt these animals, the crocodiles neither come to the Nzulezo community nor pose any threats to the community members or visitors who ply "the Jungle" route.[621] Instead, the Nzulezo people serve as a danger to these crocodiles and other animals within the Amanzule ecosystem.[622]

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[616] Joshua Ezoa in an interview with the author, August 2018, at Nzulezo.
[617] During my stay in Nzulezo, Joshua Ezoa, the Nzulezo linguist, volunteered to take me to Meander—a kind invitation, which I respectfully declined for fear of encountering danger with the crocodile. However, I learned about the Nzulezo community's distance from Meander from my research collaborators, including Akwasi Eba, Joshua Ezoa, John Arthur, Lord Ezoa. Conversations with these research collaborators happened in July 2022 at Nzulezo.
[618] Henry Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa; with a Brief History of the African Company.* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1812), 53.
[619] Adwoba Ezoa, Nda Aluah, Agya Kulu, Agya Emuah, John Arthur, and Josua Ezoa, in interviews with the author, June 2018 and August 2022, at Nzulezo.
[620] Ibid.
[621] Akwasi Eba, Joshua Ezoa, John Arthur, Arthur Aka Ezoa, and Lord Ezoa in conversations with the author, August 2022, at Nzulezo.
[622] Ibid.

Based on the above information, we can conclude that the Amanzule waterscape represents a complex and diverse ecosystem comprising amphibians, reptiles, and mammals. These organisms are surrounded by lush flora such as raffia palm trees and other aquatic plants like water hyacinths (*Eichhornia crassipes*). Imaginably, these organisms, particularly the humans and animals (crocodiles, monkeys, and fish) compete for survival within this ecosystem. However, considering that the current Nzulezo population poses threats to these animals and not the other way around, humans (Nzulezo people) appear as the dominant *organism* within the Amanzule ecosystem. This analogy suggests that the Nzulezo people probably constitute the locus of culture in this ecosystem because they exert supremacy over the other living organisms and affect the way of life on the river through activities such as fishing and hunting. This dominance, which I consider as an agency, was likely established by the early Nzulezo settlers and passed down to their descendants. I surmise that this agency was crucial to the survival of the Nzulezo forebears on the river because, as the perceived dominant species within the Amanzule waterscape, the Nzulezo ancestors were able to implement strategies, such as territorial control, that contributed to their survival on the water. These survival strategies manifest in the settlement order and the economic and socio-political systems of the pre-colonial Nzulezo community, which I discuss below.

The Nzulezo Settlement Order

Recall that Ray Kea's model broadly classifies the pre-colonial Gold Coast settlement order into two main zones—the urban and rural areas—arguing that the ruling class resided in the urban areas, whereas the peasantry and enslaved people lived in the rural areas.[623] Contrary to Kea's theorization, the pre-colonial Nzulezo settlement pattern reflected two overlapping yet

[623] Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Polities in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast*, 11.

contrasting water spaces, which I classify as *residential* and *non-residential* zones. An artificially created space, the residential zone comprised the areas exclusively inhabited by the Nzulezo people, which, in this case, represents the two places where the two Nzulezo stilt-house settlements stood. Conversely, the non-residential zone corresponded to areas on the water exclusively occupied by animals and control and—that is, anywhere on the river other than the Nzulezo village. Unlike the Gold Coast settlement order, which featured only human actors—the ruling aristocrats, peasantry, and the slave class—the Nzulezo settlement order contained three distinct organisms: plants, animals, and humans, with the latter being the dominant species.

Although the residential and non-residential zones stood in stark contrast primarily through the distinct organisms inhabiting them, these spaces were not exclusively divorced from each other because humans (the Nzulezo people) and animals (notably the fish and monkeys) frequently traversed and "invaded" each other's space. As stated above, the Nzulezo people regularly "invade" the non-residential zone to fish and kill crocodiles. On the other hand, monkeys and fish occasionally visit the Nzulezo stilt-house village (the residential zone). During two of my research stays in the Nzulezo community (in the summers of 2018 and 2022), I witnessed two monkeys that came to the Nzulezo community through the raffia palm plantation. The monkeys' visit was rather brief because they quickly escaped into the plantation upon sighting human footsteps. According to Joshua Ezoa, Akwasi Eba, Mary Eba, and Agya Yaw Hunamgbule, these monkeys frequently come to the village, especially at night or dawn, to "steal" foodstuff from their kitchen.[624] Perhaps, those monkeys I saw aborted one of their "scavenging" into the "residential zone" upon perceiving potential danger from humans.

The fleeing of monkeys and other animals upon sighting the Nzulezo people reflects a

[624] Joshua Ezoa, Akwasi Eba, Mary Eba, and Agya Yaw Hunamgbule in interviews with the author, June 2018 and August 2022, at Nzulezo.

tension in the human-animal relationship within the Nzulezo settlement order. Considering the Nzulezo people's hunting and fishing activities, humans can be cast as predators who feed on the animals for survival, as do other animals, notably the crocodiles, conceivably, prey on other organisms for subsistence. This discordant human-animal relationship within the Amanzule waterscape can be read against how the Akan conceptualize and approach animals.

Explaining humans' relationship with animals in the Akan society, historian Tom McCaskie argues that the Asante construe animals in two ways: (1) as a body of being, like humans, but it cannot explain itself—animals are *tabula rasa*, and (2) as organisms that can be domesticated or transformed.[625] As the Akan perceive a *person* to be an embodiment of *honhom* (spirit, given by God), *okra* (soul, given by father), *honam* or *nipa dua* (body), and *mogya* (blood, given by mothers), they also believe that certain plants and animals possess a unique, powerful spirit called *sasa*.[626] The *sasa* instills *tumi* (power) in such plants (e.g., Odum [*Chlorophora excelsa*]) and animals, notably *sisiri* or *kwabrafo* (ratel or honey badger, *Mellivora capensis*) and *ɛkoɔ* (buffalo).[627] The *sasa* also defines the character of the plants and animals in terms of their quality of being either "wild" or "domesticable."[628] For this reason, animals with wild *sasa* tend to live in the forest (or bush) while those with mild *sasa* often live with humans within the community.[629]

In addition to the above views, the Asante classify animals into four main categories according to their physical habitations. These groupings are:

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[625] T. C. McCaskie, "People and Animals: Constru(Ct)Ing the Asante Experience," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 62, no. 2 (1992), 221–22.
[626] Ibid, 230; Samuel Awuah-Nyamekye, "Belief in Sasa: Its Implications for Flora and Fauna Conservation in Ghana," *Nature + Culture* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2012), 1; R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti* (Oxford, UK: The Clarendon Press, 1923), 93.
[627] Ibid.
[628] McCaskie, "People and Animals," 230; Awuah-Nyamekye, "Belief in Sasa," 1.
[629] Ibid.

1. *asorommoa* (animals that primarily live above ground but not necessarily in the air. A typical example is a monkey)
2. *ntummoa* (aerial animals: e.g., birds)
3. *ntɛtemmoa* (terrestrial animals: e.g., lions)
4. nsuommoa (aquatic animals: fish)

I am careful to include *dɔtemmoa* (*dɔtɛɛ* = sand; *mmoa* = animals): that is, insects (ants and termites) that primarily inhabit the sand—Tom McCaskie overlooks this group of animals.

The present-day Nzulezo people's perception of the animals within the Amanzule waterscape follows the above Akan classifications. Agya Emuah, Agya Yaw Hunamgbule, John Arthur, and Joshua Ezoa explain that their ecology solely contains *asorommoa* (monkeys), *ntummoa* (birds), and *nsuommoa* (fish, crocodiles, and snakes).[630] They attribute the absence of *ntɛtemmoa* (terrestrial animals) and *dɔtemmoa* (like inserts) to the unavailability of "land" in the Amanzule ecology.[631] The people also demonstrate an awareness of the presence of powerful (or wild) *sasa* in these animals, particularly the crocodiles, snakes, and monkeys, which is why they choose not to "domesticate" such animals.[632] It is worth clarifying that Akwasi Eba, a Nzulezo resident in his early fifties, has begun domesticating crocodile hatchlings for tourism purposes—see Figure 23 below.[633] As the Akan believe that animals with powerful *sasa* should inhabit the forest, the Nzulezo people consider the "non-residential zone" of the Amanzule waterscape a suitable habitation for the crocodiles, monkeys, and snakes believed to possess powerful *sasa*.[634]

Agya Emuah, Agya Yaw Hunamgbule, John Arthur, and Joshua Ezoa further suggest that

[630] Agya Emuah, Agya Yaw Hunamgbule, John Arthur, and Joshua Ezoa in conversations with the author, August 2022, at Nzulezo.
[631] Ibid.
[632] Ibid.
[633] Akwasi Eba in an interview with the author, August 2022, at Nzulezo.
[634] Agya Yaw Hunamgbule, John Arthur, Agya Emuah, and Joshua Ezoa in interviews with the author, August 2022, at Nzulezo.

Figure 23: A Photo of Some Baby Crocodiles (Hatchlings) at Nzulezo

Copyright: photo taken by the author in August 2022. These hatchlings belong to Akwasi Eba who captured them at Meander. Eba displays these hatchlings to tourists who visit the Nzulezo community.

the Nzulezo people's ability to circumscribe these animals to the non-residential zone mainly through hunting allows them to "preserve" their community from potential attacks from the animals, particularly the crocodiles.[635] These research collaborators interpret their domination over the animals as a critical survival strategy.[636] It can be inferred that the pre-colonial Nzulezo population likely created this system of territorial dominance within the Amanzule waterscape, which the present-day Nzulezo descendants perpetuate. This territorial dominance might partially account for the Nzulezo ancestors' survival on the Amanzule River over time.

The Nzulezo Commercial Order

The economic activities of the present-day Nzulezo community are primarily organized around fishing, subsistence farming in the Ahumasuazo and Gyamazu (terranean) areas, palm wine and alcohol production, and tourism. Officially introduced in Nzulezo in 2000 by the Ghana government, tourism is a recent invention in Nzulezo history, and for that reason, I choose not to discuss it here.[637] Thus, fishing, farming, and palm wine and alcohol production constitute the points of discussion in this section.

According to linguist Naana Opoku-Agyemang's essay from 2008 and Samuel Ackah's undergraduate thesis from 2000, which focus on the pre-colonial history of Nzulezo, fishing, farming, and liquor production were the main economic activities of the Nzulezo ancestors.[638] Supporting the afore-mentioned claim, Joseph Pierterson's 2018 master's thesis on cultural heritage and stilt-house construction in Nzulezo, as well as my research collaborators, including Agya Emuah, Agya Kulu, Maame Nda Aluah, and Maame Adwoba Ezoa, confirm fishing,

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[635] Ibid.
[636] Ibid.
[637] UNESCO, "Nzulezu Stilt Settlement - UNESCO World Heritage Centre," UNESCO, 2000, http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/1394/.
[638] Samuel K. Ackah, "A History of Nzulezo from the Earliest Time to the Present" (Undergraduate Thesis, Cape Coast, Ghana, University of Cape Coast, 2000), 17-21; Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang, *Where There Is No Silence: Articulations of Resistance to Enslavement* (Accra, Ghana: Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2008), 42.

farming, and liquor production as the primary economic activities of both the Nzulezo forebears.[639] Agya Emuah, Agya Kulu, Maame Nda Aluah, and Maame Adwoba Ezoa further clarify that these occupations have been passed down through generations and continue to be the main source of livelihood for current residents.[640]

The above evidence shows how the pre-colonial Nzulezo community organized themselves economically. However, it does not provide enough historical context to understand the changes and continuities in their economic practices and relationships with other Appolonian communities and those afield. Considering that the Nzulezo economic occupations were handed down by Nzulezo ancestors, as stipulated by my research collaborators, we can gain a deeper historical understanding of the pre-colonial economic life of the Nzulezo forebears and how that contributed to the community's social reproduction by examining how the present-day Nzulezo dwellers conduct their economic activities. Below is a discussion of a few oral testimonies on the present-day Nzulezo economic practices.

Joshua Ezoa (Nzulezo linguist):

> In Nzulezo, fishing, palm wine and alcohol production, and farming are our primary occupations. Almost everyone conducts fishing—whether on a large or small scale. I can confidently say that fishing is men's work because we (Nzulezo males) do the large-scale fishing using nets, while our women use the *duma* trap to catch fingerlings (the small fishes). [I asked: where is fishing conducted?] Except for this place (referring to where the Nzulezo stilt-house village is

[639] Joseph Pierterson, "Safeguarding Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: Nzulezo Stilt Construction" (M.A., Budapest, Central European University, 2018), 5-8; Maame Nda Aluah, Maame Adwoba Ezoa, Agya Emuah, and Agya Kulu in separate interviews with the author, August 2022, at Nzulezo and Ahumasuazo.
[640] Maame Nda Aluah, Maame Adwoba Ezoa, Agya Emuah, and Agya Kulu in separate interviews with the author, August 2022, at Nzulezo and Ahumasuazo.

situated—i.e., the residential zone), we fish anywhere on the river. I have my nets cast at the center and eastern sides of the river. Akwasi Eba and a few others have their nets at different locations. [How do people delineate fishing territories? I asked]. There is no such thing as "my" or "your" fishing zone, and it does not matter if you are the chief, linguist, or community elder. We respect and understand one another that if my neighbor was to first cast his net, I will not overlay mine over his, and vice versa. We just set traps or lay nets next to each other's. This ensures that everyone collects just enough for himself and their household. That is how we organize our work here. [I probed: what about farming and the other economic activities? Who does those?]. We combine fishing with other occupations. For instance, in addition to fishing, I work as a tour guide with the tourism company. However, prior to the creation of tourism, I used to produce palm wine and alcohol for sale. But I quit that work because of the tourism job. However, my wife has a farm at Ahumasuazo, which produces cassava, plantain, tomato, and other foodstuffs for the household.[641]

Akwasi Eba (a.k.a. Home Stay—resident of Nzulezo in his early fifties):

I am the owner of a guesthouse and bar in Nzulezo known as Home Stay, thanks to the tourism industry. That is why they call me Home Stay. However, my family has a longstanding tradition of fishing, farming, and producing alcohol that we have carried on from our grandparents' time. For example, my wife cultivates farms in Ahumasuazo while I fish and sometimes hunt the crocodiles. I should also mention that some men have farms, but our women predominantly do the

[641] Joshua Ezoa in an interview with the author, July 2022, at Nzulezo.

farming. Our farms are relatively smaller in size, and they mainly supply foodstuff for the household. Because of that, we rarely buy agricultural produce from Beyin or other neighboring towns. Have you eaten beef, chevon, or any "red meat" throughout your stay in Nzulezo? [I answered no!]. This is because our main source of protein is fish; that is why almost every family conducts fishing. Men conduct fishing using nets, while women use traps (*duma*). [Do you sell any of the fish caught or surplus agricultural produce to neighboring villages? I asked]. Yes, the fish we (men) catch are sold at Beyin, Atuabo, and other (Appolonian) towns, and our women sell them. We catch the fish; they sell them.[642]

James Adiebe (Nzulezo resident in his late forties):

A few Nzulezo men and I are primarily involved in palm wine and alcohol (*akpeteshie*—the local name) production. We produce one of the best *akpeteshie* or liquors—you can verify this from people from Beyin, Ngelekazo, and even Atuabo. [Does this mean you sell your *akpeteshie* to the surrounding communities? I asked]. Yes, we do! But we also consume it, as you can imagine. Our women usually sell the liquor to restaurants and bars in the surrounding villages. [Why do Nzulezo women sell, and men do the production?]. Ah . . . our parents and grandparents introduced us to this economic practice oh. But I also think that men predominantly engage in liquor production because of the tedious nature of the work. I believe the selling aspect is relatively less physically demanding than the production aspect. Remember, we produce the

[642] Akwasi Eba in multiple interviews with the author, July 2017 and August 2022, at Nzulezo

liquor from the raffia palm plants in the middle of the river. All aspects of the production occur on the river, like the home construction work. It is hard work. So, we (men) do the hard work while our women sell the liquor.[643]

Maame Nda Aluah (Safohyenle's mother in her eighties):

Our (Nzulezo women's) primary responsibility is to take care of the household. So, we often concentrate on the economic activities, predominantly farming, that directly target the household. We get most of our foodstuff, including cassava, yam, plantain, and vegetable, from our farms at Gyamazu and Ahumasuazo. Some Nzulezo men also have their own farms, while some partner with us to cultivate farms. However, for the most part, we (women) do the farming. We also conduct small-scale fishing to complement what the men bring home. [I learned about Nzulezo women's engagement in selling agricultural produce, fish, and liquor. Can you tell me more about this?]. Indeed, we (the women) sell the surpluses from our farms, particularly cassava, plantain, and the like. Although these farm products are used for our sustenance, any remnants are sold to people in Beyin, Ekabaku, Ngelekazu, and other nearby towns. We also support the occupations of our husbands by selling the liquor they make and the fish they catch in the surrounding towns. We enjoy selling those goods because it generates income for us, particularly the women.[644]

Beyond confirming fishing, farming, and liquor production as the main economic occupations in Nzulezo, the above interview excepts allow us to theorize that these economic activities take place within the non-residential zone of the Amanzule waterscape and even

[643] James Adiebe in multiple interviews with the author, June 2018 and August 2022, at Nzulezo.
[644] Maame Nda Aluah in an interview with the author, August 2022, at Ahumasuazo.

outside the river space, specifically regarding farming. Drawing on Joshua Ezoa's account, we can deduce that the Nzulezo work order is likely shaped by the egalitarian principle of equity. Ezoa states, "there is no such thing as "my" or "your" fishing zone, and it does not matter if you are the chief, linguist, or community elder . . . We just set traps or lay nets next to each other's. This ensures that everyone collects just enough for himself and their household."[645] This principle of equity guides the present-day Nzulezo work order and likely shaped the economic arrangements of the pre-colonial Nzulezo population. Inquiring about the origin of this principle, Joshua Ezoa maintains that *saa ara na yɛayɛ no firi tete* (this is how it has been done from the past)—our great-grandparents did it; their children's children did it, and we continue the tradition by passing it on to our children.[646] It is possible that the pre-colonial Nzulezo community was characterized by egalitarianism, which must have enabled the members to co-construct a "fair' way of life that supported their survival on the Amanzule River.

The above oral testimonies also suggest a gendered Nzulezo work order, which allows Nzulezo men and women to perform different tasks that complement each other. It is suggested that Nzulezo males chiefly engage in fishing, *akpeteshie* production, and some small-scale farming, while females focus on farming and the sale of liquor, fish, and foodstuff. This arrangement allows for cooperation between men and women in the workspace. Men are responsible for producing marketable goods, while women take charge of the distribution and sale of these commodities, which generates income for the household. Women's work in the farms also provides food for the home. This work arrangement makes men the "stationary" economic agents, whose work is limited to the Amanzule waterscape, while women serve as the "mobile" economic actors, whose economic activities extend beyond the bounds of the

[645] Joshua Ezoa in an interview with the author, July 2022, at Nzulezo.
[646] Ibid.

Amanzule waterscape.

This socio-economic organizing significantly contributes to the social reproduction of the present-day Nzulezo community and must have shaped the evolution of the pre-colonial Nzulezo community. Agya Kulu, Maame Nda Aluah, Maame Adwoba Ezoa, and Agya Emuah suggest that, like the principles of egalitarianism, this complementary work order was likely established by the early Nzulezo settlers and passed down to them.[647] If that was the reality, then this gender-complementary work system likely formed part of the survival strategies of the pre-colonial Nzulezo population and contributed to the social evolution of the Nzulezo community throughout the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries.

The Nzulezo Socio-political Order

I suggest in chapter one that the pre-colonial itinerant Nzulezo ancestors were socio-politically organized into forty-seven families, with each family headed by a male elder.[648] We, however, have reason to believe that following their settling in eighteenth-century Appolonia, the pre-colonial Nzulezo community adopted and reproduced the then Appolonian socio-political system, which was primarily monarchical. Some 1920s through 1940s British colonial records on Appolonia's chieftaincy support the foregoing logic. Some British-documented lists of colonial Gold Coast chiefs who ruled from 1924 to 1941, which shows the names, titles, and political constituencies of these ruling elites, particularly Appolonia's, suggest that Nzulezo chiefs formed part of the governing body (or the council of elders) for the Western Nzema (formerly, Western Appolonia) paramountcy.[649] The inclusion of colonial Nzulezo chiefs—only the titles (i.e.,

[647] Agya Kulu, Maame Nda Aluah, Maame Adwoba Ezoa, and Agya Emuah in separate interviews with the author, August 2022, at Nzulezo.
[648] John Arthur, Joshua Ezoa, and Agya Emuah in conversations with the author, July 2017, at Nzulezo.
[649] "The Gold Coast Chiefs List," 1924-1941. ADM 8/4/4, "Colonial Administration Records," Public Records and Archives Administration Department (the Ghana National Archives), Accra, Ghana.

Takrika), not names, of the Nzulezo chiefs are listed in the records—on the Western Nzema's ruling council indicates a significant shift in the Nzulezo socio-political organization from an extensive family system and leadership to a monarchical structure like that of Appolonia's. Because the Appolonian socio-political system dates to the pre-eighteenth century, it is imaginable that the Nzulezo community's socio-political transformation from a seemingly non-centralized political structure to a centralized, monarchical type hacks back to the mid-eighteenth century, when the Nzulezo ancestors settled in Appolonia.[650]

Historians J. Y. Ackah, Martha Alibah, and Pierluigi Valsecchi describe the pre-colonial Appolonian socio-political system as similar to other pre-colonial Gold Coast centralized societies, such as the Asante, Denkyira, and Fante.[651] At the top of the Appolonian monarchical government was the *bɛlɛmgbunli* (king), in whose hands lay executive, judicial, and legislative powers.[652] The *bɛlɛmgbunli* worked with a council of elders and military officials, whom Ray Kea classifies as the nobles, to govern the society.[653] The *bɛlɛmgbunli*'s ascension to the Appolonian throne was solely through inheritance traced through the mother line, as was witnessed in several matrilineal societies, particularly the Asante.[654]

J. Y. Ackah maintains that in the pre-colonial Appolonian governmental structure, the *abusuakpanyinli*, the head or leader of the ruling family, who was a male, ranked second to the *bɛlɛmgbunli*.[655] The *Ndwea* matriclan family ruled the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century

[650] Historians J. Y. Ackah, Martha, and Pierluigi Valsecchi demonstrate that the pre-colonial Appolonian monarchy dates to the pre-eighteenth century. See J. Y. Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema" (M.A. Thesis, Accra: GH, University of Ghana, Legon, 1965), 2-13; Martha Alibah, *A History of the Nzema in Pre-Colonial Ghana* (Accra: GH: Woeli Publishing Services, 2013), 2-6; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 12-19.
[651] Ibid.
[652] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 27; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 21-22.
[653] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 27-29.
[654] Ibid, 27.
[655] Ackah, 29, 41-42.

Appolonian society, and the *abusuakpanyinli* headed this royal family.[656] The *abusuakpanyinli* adjudicated conflicts within the royal family and formed part of the council of elders who assisted the *belemgbunli* to govern the society.[657] Below the *abusuakpanyinli* was the queen mother, whose political office evokes historical controversies.[658] Ackah suggests that the office of the queen mother was either non-existent in pre-colonial Appolonia or a ceremonial position with seemingly superficial political power and authority.[659] However, we learn from the eighteenth-century European writer John Barbot that following the 1715 Asante conquest of Appolonia, the then Appolonian queen mother, together with her retinue, fled to the westerly Anyi Kingdom for refuge.[660] Barbot's supposition challenges Ackah's theory, clarifying that by the early eighteenth century, Appolonia had a queen mother. Notwithstanding, the Appolonian historiography predominantly relegates queen mothers and, generally, women to the background, giving them little to no historical recognition. Besides de Maree's terse account, there seem to be no critical historical discussions of queens or women's position in Appolonia's social history.[661]

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[656] *Abusuakpanyinli* Amihyia in an interview with the author, June 2018, at Beyin. Amihyia is currently the *abusuakpanyinli* of the *Ndwea* dynasty that governs Western Nzema. Amihyia is the elder brother of the current king (or paramount chief), Awulae Annor Adjaye II, of Western Nzema. Also see Ackah, p. 41-42.
[657] *Abusuakpanyinli* Amihyia in an interview with the author, June 2018, at Beyin. Ackah, 41-42.
[658] Ackah, 40.
[659] Ibid.
[660] Barbot, *Déscription de La Côte d'Or de Guinée in Déscription Des Côtes d'Afrique*, 21; John K. Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours, 1700-1807* (London: UK: Longman, 1971), 15; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 252.
[661] The key scholars (mainly historians and Italian anthropologists) of Appolonia include J. Y. Ackah, Martha Alibah, Vinigi Grottanelli, Pierluigi Valsecchi, Mariano Pavanello, P. Schirripa, and Stefano Maltese, who discuss Appolonia's and Nzema's socio-cultural, political, economic, medical, and religious histories. In their works, Appolonian and Nzema women are barely discussed. When featured, however, these scholars tend to represent women as "jural minors"—in historian Nwando Achebe's words—to Appolonian and Nzema men. See Ackah, "A History of Nzulezo"; Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema"; Pierluigi Valsecchi, "The 'True Nzema': A Layered Identity," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 71, no. 3 (2001): 391–425; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*; Valsecchi, "The 'True Nzema'"; Alibah, *A History of the Nzema in Pre-Colonial Ghana*; Martha Alibah, *The European Presence in Nzemaland (1550-1957)* (Accra, GH: Woeli Publishing Services, 2014); Annor Adjaye, *Nzima Land; with Forword by G. A. Sagoe* (London: UK: Headley, 1932); Vinigi L Grottanelli, *The Python Killer: Stories of Nzema Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Vinigi L Grottanelli, *Una società guineana: gli Nzema*, vol. 1 (Bollati Boringhieri, 1977); Mariano Pavanello, "Pawnship and Domestic Slavery in Chieftaincy Disputes (Nzema Area, Sw Ghana)," *Africa* 1, no. 1 (2019): 69–86; Mariano

In fact, the Appolonian historiography is seemingly a *his-story* of Appolonia, privileging androcentric voices rather than a gendered one.

During my field research in present-day Appolonia (i.e., Nzema), I observed that although Nzema palaces recognize the royal offices of queen mothers and women groups within the community, Nzema women appeared invisible in the political domain because they either did not directly participate in decision-making during chieftain assemblies or served in auxiliary positions during such meetings. In my attempt to speak with the queen mother of Western Nzema, for instance, I was informed that she primarily resides in Sehwi, a neighboring polity situated approximately 265 kilometers (165 miles) from the Western Nzema capital, Beyin.[662] Because of her faraway residence, the Western Nzema queen mother rarely participates in the politics of the society.[663] Conversely, the King of Western Nzema, Awulae Annor Adjaye II, is mostly stationed in Beyin, the capital, although he spends time at his other residence in Takoradi.[664] Perhaps, the seemingly subordinate political position of Nzema queen mothers relative to the kings encouraged J. Y. Ackah to suggest that "the queen mother . . . sits behind the *belemgbunli* on ceremonial occasions," indicating the former's ancillary position to the latter.[665] Unlike Appolonian queens, the pre-colonial and present-day Asante queen mothers

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Pavanello, *Shores of Slaves: Apollonia in the Akan World* (Glienicke/Nordbahn: Galda Verlag, 2022); Mariaclaudia Cristofano, Stefano Maltese, and Elisa Vasconi, "The Italian Ethnological Mission to Ghana and Cultural Cooperation: Heritage-Making Processes in the Nzema Area (South-West Ghana)," in *Imagining Cultures of Cooperation: Universities Networking to Face the New Development Challenges, Proceedings of the III Congress of the University Network for Development Cooperation (CUCS). Turin*, 2013, 19–21; Mariano Pavanello and P. Schirripa, eds., *Research Materials on Traditional Medicine in the Nzema Area (Ghana), M. Pavanello and Editors* (Accra, GH: Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, 2011).

[662] *Abusuakpanyinli* Amihyia, Mr. Stephen Assyne (a resident of Beyin and former "Assemblyman"—i.e., elected politician of the Jomoro Constituency), and Honorable Joe (the 2018-2020 Assemblyman of the Jomoro Constituency) in multiple interviews with the author, June to July 2018, at Beyin. I used Google Maps to estimate the distance between Beyin and Sehwi.

[663] *Abusuakpanyinli* Amihyia, Mr. Stephen Assyne, and Honorable Joe in interviews with the author, June to July 2018, at Beyin.

[664] Ibid.

[665] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 40.

sit *beside* (to the left of) the Asantehene (king), suggesting "a dual-gender system of leadership" and power complementarity.[666] The power dynamics between kings and queen mothers in Appolonia deserves critical scrutiny, which future studies can offer.

Next in rank to the queen mother were the male elders and *safohyenle* (war leaders) who constituted the advisory assembly to the *belemgbunli*.[667] Like the *abusuakpanyinli*, the elders and *safohyenle* assisted the king to arbitrate conflicts, formulate and enforce laws, and supervised the collection of State-imposed levies.[668] Ranked below the elders and *safohyenle* are the linguists, who primarily served as the king's spokesperson.[669] A group of palace workers, including stool carriers, horn blowers, and umbrella carriers, who altogether formed the king's *gyaase* (i.e., servants), ranked below the linguist.[670] At the bottom of the pre-colonial Appolonian socio-political order were the citizenry and the enslaved group, whom Ray Kea respectively calls the commoners and retainers.[671]

The above-described socio-political structure of the pre-colonial Appolonian society is reflected in the present-day Nzulezo community, with slight variations. Because the Nzulezo community is not a paramountcy but a constituency of the Appolonian political geography, the present-day Nzulezo community has no king. Instead, it has a chief—a political office that is, at least, traceable to the 1920s, as evidenced in the British colonial archival records.[672] According to these archival records, the Nzulezo chief functioned as a sub-chief and advisor to the

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[666] See Beverly Stoeltje, "Asante Queen Mothers: Precolonial Authority in a Postcolonial Society," *Research Review of the Institute of African Studies* 19 (2004), https://doi.org/10.4314/rrias.v19i2.22871; Beverly J. Stoeltje, "Asante Queen Mothers in Ghana," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.796.
[667] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 29.
[668] Ibid, 44.
[669] Ibid, 29, 43.
[670] Ibid; Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 14.
[671] Ibid.
[672] See "The Gold Coast Chiefs List," 1924. ADM 8/4/4, "Colonial Administration Records," Public Records and Archives Administration Department (the Ghana National Archives), Accra, Ghana.

Appolonian king.[673] Ranked below the Nzulezo chief are the *abusuakpanyinli* (head of the Nzulezo ruling family), Nzulezo queen mother (who, like the Western Nzema's queen mother, is also almost invisible in the community's politics), council of elders and *safohyenle*, Nzulezo linguists, Nzulezo chief's *gyaase*, and the Nzulezo community members (i.e., the commoners).[674] Besides the commoners and *gyaase* social groups, the other political office holders form the ruling elites of the present-day Nzulezo community. The similarities between the present-day Nzulezo socio-political order and the eighteenth-century Appolonian socio-political structure suggest that the pre-colonial Nzulezo community likely inherited and reproduced the socio-political system of pre-colonial Appolonia society.

This socio-political system contributed significantly to the growth of the pre-colonial Nzulezo community. One such impact relates to maintaining law and order within the pre-colonial Nzulezo population. Nzulezo chief Nana Takrika VII, Agya Kulu, and Safohyenle Kwame explain that it is customary for Nzulezo chiefs and elders to arbitrate conflicts within the community.[675] Should these conflicts be unresolved, they are escalated to the *belemgbunli* (king) in Western Nzema.[676] They suggest that lesser offenses such as theft cases and disrespectfulness (casting insults) toward elders are often adjudicated through direct negotiations (or "talking") between the offender and the offended.[677] However, "serious" offenses (including murder, incest, and conspiracy to dethrone the *belemgbunli*) are settled through the *enlonle*, a trial by

[673] Ibid.
[674] During my research stays in Nzulezo, I never encountered the Nzulezo queen mother. I was told she also lives at Tikobo Two, a westerly Appolonian town about 36 kilometers (22 miles) from the Nzulezo community. Agya Kulu, Safohyenle Kwame, Akwasi Eba, and Joshua Ezoa in an interview with the author, June 2018 and August 2022, at Nzulezo.
[675] Nana Takrika VII, Agya Kulu, and Safohyenle Kwame in conversations with the author, August 2022, at Nzulezo and Ahumasuazo.
[676] Ibid.
[677] Ibid.

ordeal.[678] Identical to the *amonle* ritual discussed in chapters two and three, the *enlonle* involves the eating of a poisonous tree called *enlonle*, which grows in the Appolonian town of Kabenlasuazo.[679] My research collaborators explain that prayers (through libation) are said on the *enlonle* to imbue it with spiritual power. The alleged culprits, who deny any criminal offenses, are then made to chew the bark of the *enlonle* tree to prove innocence. It is believed that if the culprits are innocent, they will vomit the *enlonle* three times, but if guilty, they would not throw up, which might lead to their death.[680]

J. Y. Ackah corroborates the accounts of Nana Takrika VII, Agya Kulu, and Safohyenle Kwame, clarifying that at the State level, the *belemgbunli* and his council of elders respectively applied the direct negotiation and *enlonle* methods in settling lesser and hefty offenses.[681] Ackah's and my research collaborators' suppositions suggest that the pre-colonial Nzulezo population most likely relied on the then Appolonian socio-political system to maintain law and order within their community, reflecting one of the veritable means through which the pre-colonial Appolonian socio-political system contributed to the social evolution of the pre-colonial Nzulezo community.

Conclusion

Historian Ray Kea has argued that the social evolution of the pre-colonial Gold Coast society subsisted on three interrelated systems: (1) the settlement order, which involved the configuration of the pre-colonial Gold Coast political ecology into rural and urban locales, with the ruling aristocrats occupying the urban space while the peasantry and enslaved people living in the rural areas; (2) the commercial order—this helped regulate the production and distribution

[678] Ibid.
[679] Ibid.
[680] Ibid.
[681] Ackah, "Kaku Ackah and the Split of Nzema," 47-60.

of goods and services among local Gold Coasters and between Gold Coasters and external traders, particularly Europeans; and (3) the socio-political and military order, which corresponds to the political organizations and governmental apparatuses that helped define sovereignty and political power and authority in pre-colonial Gold Coast.

Following Kea's three-pronged framework, I maintain that the pre-colonial Nzulezo community also sustained itself on the Amanzule River through similar reproduction systems. The people developed a deep understanding of the Amanzule waterscape that allowed them to control the water space and dominate other organisms, including plants and animals like monkeys and crocodiles, within the waterscape. The people's dominance positioned them at the center of culture within the Amanzule waterscape and likely served as the *sine qua non* for their economic and socio-political sustenance. Economically, the pre-colonial Nzulezo population engaged in fishing, subsistence farming, and alcohol production, which were altogether gendered. Nzulezo males primarily engaged in fishing and alcohol production, while the women sold the fish and liquor produced by the men elsewhere. Nzulezo men and, mainly, the women, cultivated farms in the Ahumasuazo and Gyamazu areas, which provisioned their homes with foodstuff. Through these economic engagements, the Nzulezo ancestors sustained themselves on the Amanzule River throughout the mid-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The people's socio-political organizing followed Appolonia's, which was predominantly monarchical. Kings and their council of elders constituted the ruling aristocrats in pre-colonial Appolonia. These aristocrats governed the peasant and the slave social groups, ensuring the socio-political reproduction of the Appolonian society. In pre-colonial Nzulezo, chiefs and their council of elders ruled the community, replicating the administrative and legal systems of Appolonian. My research collaborators explain that their ways of adjudicating conflicts, for

instance, were similar to that of Appolonia's. By this analogy, we can construe the pre-colonial Nzulezo socio-political system as a subset of the larger Appolonian socio-political order, contributing to the social reproduction of both Appolonia and the Nzulezo community.

Altogether, the pre-colonial Nzulezo settlement, economic, and socio-political systems accounted for the community's survival on the Amanzule River from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. These systems constituted the Nzulezo ancestors' survival strategies for living on the river over time.

CONCLUSION

The history of Nzulezo is one of resilience and survival, a story of roving experiences and human adaptation to physically challenging environments. From the Niger Bend to the southwestern Gold Coast and from the pre-eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, the people of Nzulezo likely experienced the diverse historical phenomena of West Africa, including human movements, trade, and warfare. Previously a people of land, the Nzulezo population is now a people of water. Their story deserves a place in African historiography.

"Living with Water" has attempted to position Nzulezo and its people in African history by tracing their provenance to the Middle Niger, mapping out their seemingly challenging journeys from the Middle Niger to the pre-colonial Kingdom of Appolonia on the Gold Coast. Although scholars like Pierluigi Valsecchi and J. A. Essuah have traced the origins of the Nzulezo people to the Ewuture ethnic group in present-day southeastern Ivory Coast, Nzulezo oral traditions unambiguously emphasize the Mali Empire or an indeterminate place within this empire as their ancestral homeland.[682] I have drawn significantly on these oral traditions to offer an "alternative history" to Valsecchi's and Essuah's. I espouse that the Nzulezo ancestors likely fled the declining Mali Empire sometime in the second half of the seventeenth century, trekking south to the Bono-Banda area located in the interior of the Gold Coast forest region. Sojourning in Takyiman in the Bono Kingdom, probably for over four decades, the Nzulezo ancestors likely immersed themselves in the socio-cultural, political, and economic practices and systems of the Takyiman-Bono (Akan) society.

The Nzulezo people's stay in Takyiman-Bono was, however, likely cut short by the

[682] J. A. Essuah, *Mekakye Bie*, vol. I–III (Cape Coast, Ghana: Catholic Mission Press, 1958), 116-116; Pierluigi Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa: Appolonia from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 45, 47-51.

1722/1723 Asante invasion and destruction of the Bono and Banda Kingdoms, which displaced several Bono and Banda inhabitants across the Gold Coast. The Nzulezo ancestors decided to journey further southward to Mankessim and later Appolonia. Throughout the journeys, spirituality—i.e., the people's reverence and seemingly unquestionable adherence to *evu*, their snail deity—and the quest for security and a better livelihood formed the bases of their continuous migrations from the Middle Niger to Appolonia. I maintain that by the mid-1700s, the Nzulezo ancestors had entered Appolonia.

As argued in chapter two, it is one thing to have reasons to live in a particular location and another to be accepted into that location. The Nzulezo ancestors' quest for refuge in Appolonia and their spiritually informed decision (i.e., *evu* directing them) to enter the kingdom did not necessarily grant them *entrée* into King Amihyia's Appolonia. I argue that Appolonia's powerful *amonle* covenant and open-border policy, both of which served as significant attractions to several Gold Coast peoples like the Nkroful and Anyinase communities, made it relatively easy for King Amihyia to accept the Nzulezo migrants. Besides the *amonle* covenant and open-border policy, Appolonia's water-protected borders, coupled with its seemingly minimal engagement in the Atlantic slave trade, cast the kingdom as a relatively peaceful place to live. Therefore, the Nzulezo ancestors must have considered these factors in their choice to settle in Appolonia.

The Nzulezo ancestors' settling on the Amanzule River is debatable. Henry Meredith, the late eighteenth-century British Governor of the Gold Coast, suggests that King Amihyia circumscribed the Nzulezo migrants to the river space because of their perceived "disaffected" and "ill-disposed" temperament.[683] Conversely, Nzulezo oral traditions insinuate that *evu* led the

[683] Henry Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa*, 51.

Nzulezo ancestors to the Amanzule River.[684] I maintain that the former was probably the case, as the itinerant Nzulezo forebears could not have settled anywhere in Appolonia without the permission of the king. I further maintain that before settling on the Amanzule River, the pre-colonial Nzulezo population likely lived in the Appolonian towns of Ahumasuazo and Gyamazu, where they planned and prepared building materials for the construction of their first stilt-house village. Drawing on Meredith's 1812 second-hand account, I suggest that the Nzulezo people's inhabiting the Amanzule River likely occurred sometime between mid-1700 and 1812.

Living in the middle of the Amanzule River opened an interesting episode in Nzulezo people's history that discusses the benefits and challenges of their aquatic life. For example, the people gained ready access to fresh water and water food like fish while navigating severe natural disasters like (alleged) fire eruptions. These occurrences, particularly the fire outbreaks, led to the creation of the second Nzulezo stilt-house settlement sometime between 1812 and 1848, which has since remained on the southern side of the river. I argue that the people's ability to survive in the Amanzule waterscape, co-inhabited by mammals, amphibians, and reptiles, as well as lush flora such as raffia palm vegetation, was dependent on both ideological and practical systems of social reproduction. Ideologically, the pre-colonial Nzulezo population considered the Amanzule River a male god and *mother* who sheltered them. For this reason, the people perceived the Amanzule River as an epicenter of spiritual power and safety, which encouraged them to remain in that watery ecology.

Regarding their practical survival strategies on the river, I contend that the pre-colonial Nzulezo ancestors had to position themselves as the dominant organism within the Amanzule waterscape through their command over plants and animals, such as crocodiles, pythons, and

[684] John Arthur, Joshua Ezoa, Akwasi Eba, and Safohyenle Kwame are some of the proponents of this theory.

monkeys, that co-shared the waterscape. As the dominant organism, the pre-colonial Nzulezo people redefined territories and the ownership of space within the waterscape, allowing them to circumscribe the animals and plants to sections of the river that I classify as the *non-residential zone.* Meanwhile, they lived in the *residential zone*. I maintain that this territorial reconfiguration was an effective and necessary survival strategy that promoted self-preservation. It kept dangerous animals at bay from the Nzulezo village.

In addition to territorial configurations, the people designed a gendered economic system that encouraged Nzulezo males and females to work side-by-side in cultivating farms. The men, however, exclusively engaged in alcohol production and fishing, while the women distributed (or sold) the liquor and fish produced by the men to surrounding Appolonian communities. This work arrangement contributed to the social reproduction of the Nzulezo community on the Amanzule River. Politically, the pre-colonial Nzulezo people organized their community along the socio-political order of pre-colonial Appolonia. Previously practicing a seemingly non-centralized system of government, the Nzulezo ancestors came to adopt and reproduce Appolonia's monarchical governing style, which positioned kings and their male sub-chiefs at the whelms of political affairs. These ruling elites controlled the society's commoners (peasants) and retainers (enslaved people). In pre-colonial Nzulezo, chiefs and their council of male elders governed the community, closely imitating the laws and other Appolonian governmental apparatuses in Nzulezo. Like the gendered economic system, this Appolonian-made socio-political order partially accounted for the social evolution of the pre-colonial Nzulezo community from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century.

Although a micro-history, Nzulezo's story lends historiographical significance to the critical study of pre-colonial African history, particularly the slave trade in West Africa. One

such significance relates to how my argument about Appolonia's minimal participation in the Atlantic slave trade helps to reconsider theories in African historiography suggesting that pre-colonial West African polities transformed into hegemonic and slave-trading societies during the Atlantic era. In chapter three, I identify some factors, including the *amonle* covenant and the almost invisible European presence in Appolonia, that contributed to Appolonia's minimal involvement in the eighteenth- and the early nineteenth-century Atlantic slave trade. I will acknowledge here that there might be other unconsidered factors to that argument, which readers may consider as a limitation of my thesis. However, it is essential to note that answering *precisely* why the slave trade did not flourish in Appolonia or providing *all evidence* to prove why Appolonia was such an outlier might not be as important as showing what we gain by asking these questions: Why does it matter to study regions of West Africa where the slave trade was less dominant? What do outliers like Appolonia teach us about more critical historical questions concerning empires, culture, and African agency in the era of the transatlantic slave trade?

Answers to the above questions help to reconsider the "predatory thesis," which some slave trade scholars promoted about two decades ago. Slave trade historians like Martin Klein and Robin Law have argued that pre-colonial West African kingdoms like the Dahomey, Asante, and Oyo were seemingly inherently hegemonic and predatory because they consistently provisioned and replenished their societies with enslaved people obtained through warfare from exterior geographies.[685] For this purpose, these kingdoms transformed into slave-trading empires

[685] See Martin A. Klein, "The Slave Trade and Decentralized Societies," *The Journal of African History* 42, no. 1 (2001): 49–65; Martin A. Klein, "The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on the Societies of the Western Sudan," *Social Science History* 14, no. 2 (1990): 231–53; Robin Law, *The Oyo Empire c. 1600-c. 1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Aldershot, England; Brookfield, Vt.: Gregg Revivals, 1992); Robin Law, *The Slave Coast of West Africa, 1550-1750: The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on an African Society* (Oxford : New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

that pillaged relatively less-powerful West African societies, typically non-centralized societies, for enslaved people, who were either exchanged for more iron and European guns or made to work within the "predatory" slave-trading kingdoms.[686] Slave trade historians like Martin Klein, Walter Hawthorne, and Andrew Hubbell have generally classified this slave-capture cycle as the "predatory thesis."[687] However, respectively discussing the resistance strategies of the Balanta and Souroudougou societies of West Africa, Walter Hawthorne and Andrew Hubbell have reconsidered the "predatory thesis," arguing that not all non-centralized pre-colonial West African societies served as "reservoirs" for slave capture because these two societies successfully resisted such impositions.[688]

"Living with Water" advances Hawthorne's and Hubbell's counter-thesis but from a different angle. Instead of demonstrating the successful resistance of non-centralized societies against the slave-trading societies, this study challenges the notion that not all pre-colonial West African "powerful" kingdoms were inherently hegemonic and slave-thirsty during the Atlantic era. Although Pierluigi Valsecchi describes the Kingdom of Appolonia as the most powerful pre-colonial kingdom on the western Gold Coast, Appolonia did not engage in slave captures.[689] The Appolonian Kingdom was different from other centralized polities of that era, including the Asante, Akwamu, Dahomey, and Oyo, because (1) ideologically, Appolonia opposed the Atlantic slave trade, and (2) politically, it did not engage in territorial expansion wars that could have generated enslaved people *en masse* for sale. Appolonia, therefore, lends itself as an exception to the predatory thesis, challenging the notion that pre-colonial West African

[686] Klein, "The Slave Trade and Decentralized Societies," 49–65.
[687] See Andrew Hubbell, "A View of the Slave Trade from the Margin: Souroudougou in the Late Nineteenth-Century Slave Trade of the Niger Bend," *Journal of African History* 42, no. 1 (2001): 25–47; Walter Hawthorne, *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformations along the Guinea-Bissau Coast,1400-1900* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003); Klein, "The Slave Trade and Decentralized Societies."
[688] Hubbell, "A View of the Slave Trade from the Margin"; Hawthorne, *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves*.
[689] Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, 50-57.

kingdoms, particularly those on the West African coast, were inherently hegemonic and predatory.

GLOSSARY

- **Abusuakpanyinli** derives from two Nzema words: *abusua* (family) and *kpanyinli* (elder or senior). Abusuakpanyinli, therefore, corresponds to the leader or elder of a family, typically the extended family or clan.
- **Amihyia Kpanyinli** was the Appolonian king (*bɛlɛmgbunli* or *awulae*) from 1758 to 1778. The Nzulezo people settled in Appolonia during the Amihyia Kpanyinli's regime, during which Appolonia fought and routed the Dutch West India Company (also known as the W.I.C.) three times from 1762 to 1764. These victories did not only increase Amihyia Kpanyinli's renown on the Gold Coast but also set him up as one of the successful rulers of Appolonia.
- **Amonle** is a popular Nzema word that translates to curse, oath, or ordeal test. In pre-colonial Appolonia, amonle functioned as a ritual and covenant that helped define relationships between Appolonians and new settlers. The ritual involved mixing (human) blood with some herbal concoction, which Appolonian kings and the leaders of the newcomers drank to initiate a political and socio-spiritual covenant that earned the newcomers the king's protection and a place in Appolonia. In return, the newcomers offered unwavering allegiance to the king and the kingdom. Amonle played a role in the Appolonian-Nzulezo settlement agreement.
- **Ankobra River (also called the Siana)** represents the body of water bordering the Appolonian Kingdom to the east. Siane is the Nzema name of the river. The Portuguese named the river Ankobra or Ancobra, inspired by the river's snake-like waterway.
- **Anomabo, Cape Coast,** and **Elmina** were important coastal towns on the Gold Coast. They were popularly known for their critical positions in Atlantic trading, particularly the

slave trade, throughout the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.

- **Appolonia** is the pre-colonial Gold Coast kingdom where the Nzulezo ancestors settled. Situated in the southwestern Gold Coast, Appolonia belonged to the broader Nzema country. It was bounded by the Atlantic Ocean, the Ankobra River, and the Tano River to the south, east, and west. The kingdom's northern frontier was not water protected. See Figure 2. Appolonia was established sometime in the late seventeenth century. However, by 1873/74, Appolonia's pre-colonial government gave way to British colonialism after its protracted civil war weakened and split the kingdom into Eastern and Western Appolonia. By the 1920s, Appolonians changed their name from "Appolonia" to "Nzema," reasserting their "pristine" Nzema identity.
- **Banda Kingdom** was one of the powerful pre-colonial polities that existed in the hinterland of the Gold Coast. It lay north of the Bono Kingdom. See Figures 3 and 4. The most populated pre-colonial city in the Gold Coast hinterland, called Bighu (also spelled Begho), existed in Banda. Historians and archaeologists describe Bighu as the most significant entrepôt in the Gold Coast interior that facilitated the flows of goods and humans between the southerly Akan forest region and the northern Mande world. Nzulezo oral tradition suggests that the itinerant Nzulezo ancestors temporarily lived in Takyiman or Takyiman-Bono for roughly four decades. Considering that Takyiman or Takyiman-Bono lay roughly 31 kilometers (19.2 miles) south of Bighu or the Banda Kingdom. See Figure 4.
- **Bɛlɛmgbunli** (also spelled Belemgbunli) is a Nzema word for king or paramount chief. Bɛlɛmgbunli is interchangeably used with Awulae, which carries the same meaning.

- **Bono Kingdom (also referred to as Bono-Mansu)** was the first Akan polity to be established in the Gold Coast interior. Its founders were the Bono people, an Akan group believed to have emerged from an underground cavern called *Amowi*. Asaman is believed to be the first king of the Bono Kingdom. Among the famous towns in the Bono Kingdom were Nkoranza and Takyiman. Nzulezo oral tradition stipulates that the Nzulezo ancestors sojourned in Takyiman (also called Takyiman-Bono) for not less than four decades—i.e., at least one generation of a lifetime. See Figures 3 and 4.
- **Enlonle** was a pre-colonial arbitration tool embodying a trial by ordeal. Like the *amonle* ritual, *enlonle* involved eating a poisonous tree called *enlonle* to prove one's innocence to an allegation. Oral tradition relates that prayers (through libation) are invoked on the *enlonle* to imbue it with spiritual power. The alleged culprits, who deny the levied criminal offenses, are made to chew the bark of the *enlonle* tree to prove innocence. It is believed that if the culprits are innocent, they will vomit the *enlonle* three times, but if guilty, they will not throw up, which might lead to their death.
- **Maanle** is a Nzema word for a polity or an independent territory. It is synonymous with the Twi word *oman* or a state. However, in the Nzema context, *maanle* signifies a cultural "world" of a people. That is the composite socio-cultural, spiritual, economic, and political constituents of a people's being. Hence, Nzema *maanle* corresponds to both the state/polity and the cultural world of the Nzema people.
- **Mali Empire** constitutes one of the ancient kingdoms that existed in the savanna and woodland regions of Western Sahara (or what is today West Africa) from the mid-thirteenth century to the second half of the seventeenth century—see Figure 3. The Mali Empire is esteemed for its powerful kings (also known as *Mansa*), notably Mansa Musa,

as well as its rich history in religion (Islam), education, (bullion) trade, and other forms of medieval civilizations. The present-day Nzulezo descendants explain that their forebears originated from an indeterminate place in the Mali Kingdom.

- **Mankessim, Shama, and Ahanta** are coastal towns on the Gold Coast where the itinerant Nzulezo ancestors sojourned before permanently settling in Appolonia.
- **Nzema** has three meanings. First, it represents the Akan people who live on the southwestern-most part of the Gold Coast (i.e., present-day Ghana). Unlike other Akan peoples like the Asante who speak Twi or the Fante who speak Fante, the Nzema people speak "Nzema." Thus, Nzema as a language represents another (or the second) meaning of the term, *Nzema*. Finally, Nzema is loosely used to define the broader geographical territory of the Nzema people. This territory stretches from the Tano-Dwene-Ehy River basin in the west to the easterly border separating Ahanta from the Evaloɛ (Nzema) people. See Figure 7 on page 54. Some Nzema people live beyond the western and eastern bounds of the above-described territories, going as far as Ahanta in the east and Assynie in the west. The Kingdom of Appolonia was a fraction of the Nzema territory or *maanle* (world).
- **Nzulezo** is the socio-cultural identity of the people who lived in the middle of the Amanzule River in the pre-colonial Kingdom of Appolonia. Nzulezo derives from the combination of two Nzema words, *nzule* and *zo*. *Nzule* represents "water" and *zo*, "on." Thus, *Nzulezo* means "on water," but socio-culturally, it serves as the socio-cultural identity of the group living on the Amanzule River. This dissertation centers on this group of people, the Nzulezo people.
- **Safohyenle**, whose Twi and Fante variants are *ɔsa hene* and *safo hen*, respectively, is a

royal title for Appolonian or Nzema war chiefs or leaders. Occupants of this royal office did not only lead communities to war but also advise chiefs and decide on their appointment, installation, and destoolment. Safoyenles were and continue to be esteemed community leaders in Appolonia or Nzema.

- **Takyiman or Takyiman-Bono** was an important town in the Bono Kingdom. The Nzulezo ancestors temporarily lived in Takyiman for four decades or more before emigrating southward to Mankessim on the coast of the Gold Coast. See the notes on the Bono Kingdom.
- **Tano River or the Tano-Dwene- Ehy River basin** constitutes the western border of the Appolonian Kingdom. This cluster of rivers is larger than the easterly Ankobra River. The Ankobra and Tano Rivers form part of the large bodies of water in present-day Ghana.
- **Waterscape** is a term water historians use to describe how people "see" water. It helps explain the lives and histories of populations in geographical regions where bodies of water dominate and serve as foundations for their biological, socio-cultural, and economic systems. *Waterscape* is often used in opposition to *landscape*.

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